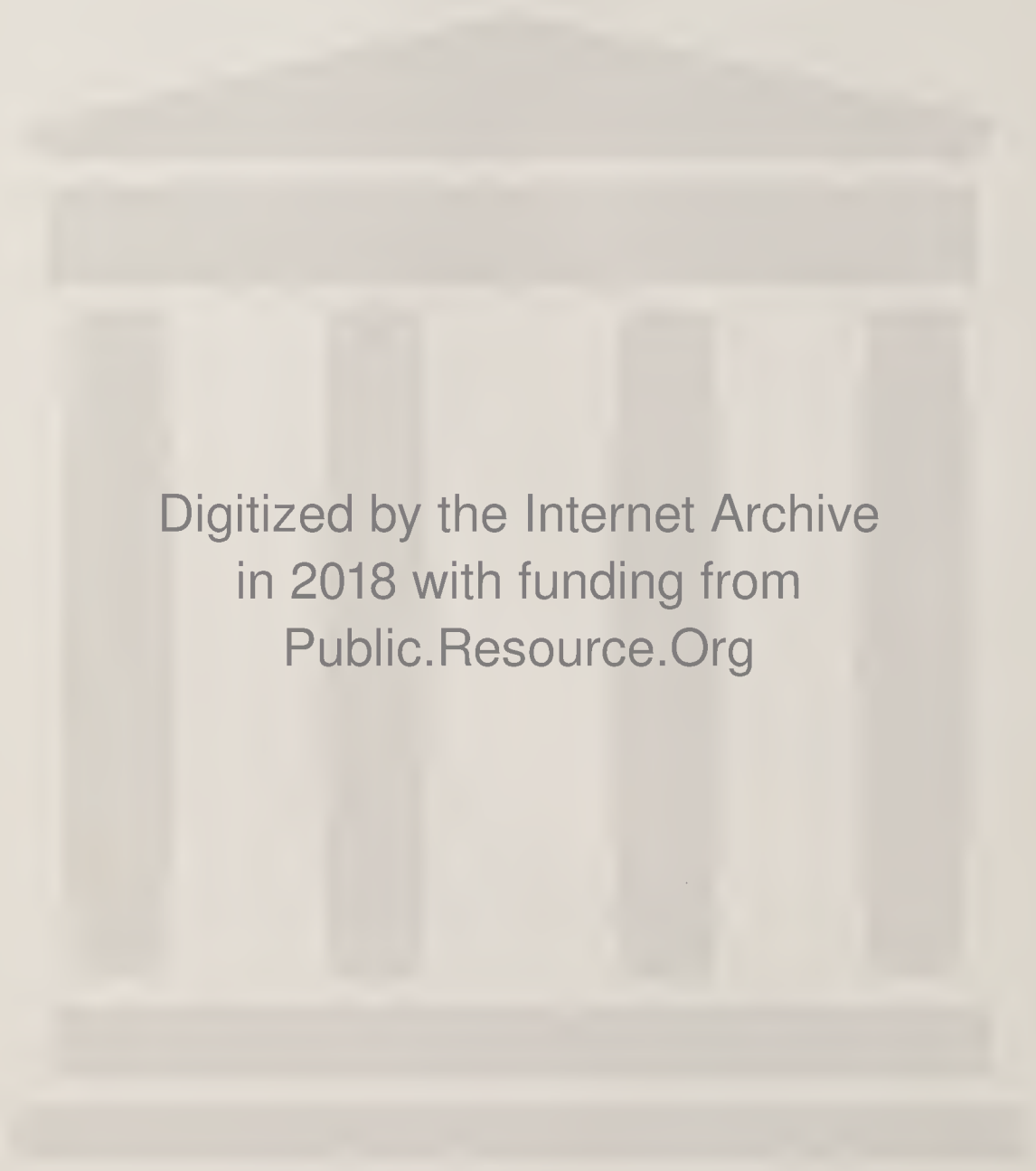


Culture and folklore of
MIZORAM

B. LALTHANGLIANA





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CULTURE AND FOLKLORE OF MIZORAM

B. LALTHANGLIANA



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Foreword

The Mizos, who are of Mongoloid origin had very little written document on their culture and folklore. It was penned mostly by British officers who were stationed at Mizoram (then called Lushai Hills) in the last part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The old records, though very valuable for reference do not cover all the aspects of Mizo culture and folklore.

We, the Mizos are progressing in all spheres of life including Science and Technology. In this fast paced modern way of life, it seems that the present-day Mizo youths have somewhat forgotten their culture, tradition and the folktales of yore. Even otherwise Mizo culture and tradition somehow does not seem to get properly highlighted as the Mizos in general have adopted Christianity as their religion.

Keeping these view points in mind, a systematic and thorough study of Mizo culture based on authentic facts is required in order to educate the youths of today about the ancient Mizo culture and tradition.

The author of this book Shri. B. Lalthangliana attempts at highlighting the social and cultural aspects of Mizo life not only in North East India but also in the adjoining areas like Myanmar and Bangla Desh.

This book which is based on well-researched facts is seemingly different from all such similar writing elsewhere. The approach to the book is appropriate and highly commendable.

I am confident that this book will prove an invaluable source of knowledge for those who are interested in Mizo culture, history and folklore. I also hope that this book will go a long way in integrating the Mizo state with the rest of India.

DR. R. Lalthangliana
Minister,
School Education Environment
and Forest, Mizoram
Chairman
North East
School Education Minister's Committee

Preface

I had two motives when I started writing this book. Firstly, the Mizo tribe is a fast developing tribe and this is evident from the fact that fifty years after the Christian Missionaries first set foot in Mizoram in 1894, almost half of the total population had embraced the Christian faith and by the time Mizoram celebrated its Gospel Centenary in 1994, it may not be wrong to say that every Mizo had adopted the Christian faith. However while we say that there was development in one field, one notices that people gradually seemed to be discarding their old customs and ways of life and this is found to be quite true because singing and chanting of traditional songs and poems are hardly heard in modern Mizo society. All this is due to the influence of Christianity.

Christian Missionaries provided Alphabet (the Mizo Alphabet) in the year 1894 and by 1898 schools started functioning. Mizos now hold the second highest literacy rate (81.27% in 1991, 89.96% in 1997) in the country. The Missionaries educated us in every aspect. This brought changes and progress in the Mizo society.

While there is rapid development in one area, there is also decline and decay on the other. It is noticeable that the Mizos people are slowly and gradually forgetting their culture, tradition and folktales. Thus, to make the younger generation aware of the old system, is the main purpose of this book. Which I hope, this will encourage and help them to understand the need to preserve our culture and traditions.

In my efforts to bring out the best I have collected as many folktales as I could and tried my best to document them.

Some of these articles and research work are now included in the syllabus in schools, colleges and at University level in the state. It is also worth mentioning that six books so far have been published on the subject in Mizo. In 1988 the North Eastern Council with its headquarters in Shillong compiled and published in Mizo version along with a number of drawings and photographs. This is an important document for the preservation of the Mizo culture and tradition and I strongly believe that this book will surely prove to be a valuable asset for generations to come.

Secondly, before the year 1950, the Mizo History, Culture and Tradition were all written by the British Administrators and Missionaries between the years 1965 and 1985. This trend was changed after 1985 when educated Indians published books on different aspects of the Mizo tribe. We are thankful to all for providing us well-written records. There was a feeling that they are incomplete because the documents were all written by one who is not part of Mizo society. Thus, it was felt that a book written by a Mizo would be the best in the study of our own culture and tradition. I visited a number of places having some resemblances with our society, met prominent citizens, referred old documents and have managed to document the research into a book. I hope that will help all those who want to get information on Mizo culture and folktales.

My sincere thanks and gratitude are meant for Mr. Allen Richardson of Tahan, Myanmar and to my colleagues in the English Department of Hrangbana College, Aizawal, Mizoram, Mr. Lian Khingte, Ms. Zohmingliani Lyngdoh and Mrs. Khawltinkimi and also to my mentor in the translation of folktales Prof. Dr. Than Tun, Mandalay University, Myanmar and P.L. Liandinga for rendering their valuable help in different aspects. Without their interest and tireless efforts the English version of the book would not have been possible.

Last but not the least I convey my thanks to the Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India who made the publication of the book possible.

Aizawl.

October, 2005

B. Lalthangliana

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. B. Lalthangliana was born at Khawbung, Mizoram in 1945. He has done his post graduation in History from Mandalay University and he also served as a Lecturer in this University from 1973-1985. He returned to his native land in 1986 and served Hrangbana Government College, Aizawl, Mizoram as a Lecturer from 1987 onwards.



The Author is a Member of the Tribal Art and Culture Advisory Board, Mizo Language Board and Mizoram Publication Board formed by the Government of Mizoram. He is also a member of Syllabus Committee for the Schools and Colleges in Mizoram. He was the Project Director of a Study Group of Mizo History and Cultural Heritage in 1994-2001 and is a Leader of a Study Team of Mizo Origin since 2000 formed by Government of Mizoram. He was the Secretary of the Mizo Academy of Letters in 1988-2000 and the President of Mizo Writers' Association since 2001. He is also the Convener and Architect of the '**Mizo Poets' Square**' at Khawbung.

The Author has about 186 Essays, 32 Research Papers and 33 books to his credit. He was awarded the '**Zosaphara Award**' and '**Khawbung Centenary Award**' in 1995 and 2003.

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INTRODUCTION

The Land

Mizoram, one of the fabled Seven Sisters of the north east covers an overall area of 21,087 sq. km. It's width from east to west is 121 km.

Mizoram shares its borders with three states – Assam, Tripura and Manipur. Its border with Manipur is extended over 95 km. The states has also common borders with two foreign countries, Burma (now Myanmar) and Bangla Desh. The total length of Mizoram's International border adds up to 722 km.

Situated between 21.58° north to 24.35° north latitude and 92.15° east to 93.29° east longitude, Mizoram is shaped like a narrow triangle. The route of the Tropic of Cancer passes near Aizawl, the capital. Mizoram is divided into eight districts namely, Aizawl, Lunglei, Champhai, Mamit, Chhitmtuipui, Lawngtlai, Serchhip and Kolasib.

Mizoram is the land of hills, rivers and lakes. As many as 21 major hill ranges or peaks of various heights run through the length and breadth of the state leaving of course, some plains scattered occasionally here and there.

The average height of the hill to the west of the state is about 1,000 metres which rises to 1,300 metres to the east. The Blue Mountain, situated in the south-eastern part of the state, is the highest peak in Mizoram.

There are plenty of rivers, both big and small. The Tawng (Dhaleshwar), which is considered the most important river in northern Mizoram, flows north to join the Barak in Assam's Cachar district. The Chhimtupui (Kolodyne), which originates in Myanmar, is an important river in the south Mizoram.

Lakes are scattered all over the state, but most important of them are Palak, Tamdil, Bungdil and Rengdil.

Climate

The upper parts of the hills are predictably cool during the summer, while the lower reaches are relatively warm and humid. Storms break out during March-April, just before or around the summer.

The maximum average temperature in the summer is 30°C, while in the winter the minimum average is around 11°C. The four months between November and February are winter time in Mizoram which is followed by the spring. The storms come in the middle of April to herald the beginning of the summer. The mercury starts rising and the hills come under the cover of a haze. The three months from June to August are rainy season. The climate is at its moderate best in the two autumnal months, September and October, when the temperature moves between 19°C to 25°C.

Taken all in all, Mizoram is made up of wooded hills, swift flowing rivers, quick-silver streams and still lakes, the combination of all which is a rarity. And it is the combination of these physical features that has given Mizo its own charm and fascination.

Population

The first complete census in the Mizoram conducted by the British in 1901, recorded a population of 82,434. According to the latest census conducted in 2001, the population of Mizoram has risen to 8,91,058 out of which 4,59,783 are male and 4,31,275 are female.

The land is inhabited by various clans such as Hmar, Lai (Pawi), Lusei, Mara (Lakher), Paite, Ralte who have many subclans, who are collectively known as 'Mizo'. Majority of the people are Christians.

Education

Before the Christian Missionaries arrived in 1894, there was no formal education among the Mizo. The two pioneer Missionaries namely James Herbert Lorrain and F.W. Savidge arrived in Mizoram on 11 January, 1811. Mizo language has no script of its own. These missionaries introduced the Roman script for Mizo language and formal education and created Mizo Alphabet on March 1894. The first Primary school was opened on 2 April, 1894.

Today, consciousness of the people in Mizoram for education is high and growing fast. Apart from government educational institutions, a number of private schools have rapidly increased to meet the growing demand for better and high standard of education. Mizoram has a very high percentage of literacy 88.49% (1991) and stands second in the whole country next only to Kerala.

After Mizoram had been under North Eastern Hill University, Shillong for 24 years, the Mizoram Central University came into being on 2 July, 2001 and has 25 departments.

Communications

Mizoram is situated in a remote corner of the country and due to its rugged terrain, the state of Mizoram suffers from lack of good communications systems. In spite of the fact that India has the most extensive railway network in the world, Mizoram came to be connected by metre gauge railways only in 1988 at Bairabi, which incidentally, is used solely for transportation of cargo.

A standard airport was constructed in the later part of the year 1998 at Langpui by which Mizoram came to enjoy air connection with the rest of the country.

Mizoram, being a landlocked state, its transport infrastructure is essentially dependent on development of roadway network. The 7,000 kms road length in the state is currently looked after by the BRTF and the PWD of the state.

Background

We, the Mizo all agree that our origin was Chhinlung. However, the exact location of Chhinlung and the date and time of our origin remains a mystery. Some people have theories, but we still cannot accept their theories whole heartedly, *in toto*.

Among the large group of Orientals classified as the Tibeto-Chinese group, there is a sub-division called the Tibeto-Burman family. A branch of this latter group known as the Assam-Burman group, consisting of the Nagas, the Burmese, the Kachins and the Mizo are regarded as one group, due to similarities in their languages and speech.

Long ago, the conglomeration of Tibeto-Burman families settled in the north-west of China. They migrated to the west along the borders of Tibet; then moved down south into Myanmar. It is believed that they reached Myanmar in the beginning of the year 800 A.D.

Then, from the north of Myanmar, they moved down the banks of Chindwin river, settled in the Kabaw valley, and spread out in the vicinity of the present Tahan-Khampat area. Here they resided from the year 800-1300 A.D. The majority of them lived in and around Khampat. However, the Shans who outnumbered them and were much stronger, entered the Kabaw Valley. The Mizo were different and unable to stand up against the Shans; and so they left the Kabaw valley in the year 1300 A.D.

After leaving Kabaw valley to their enemies, most of the Mizo moved west to Than Hills and the banks of the Run river, in the area which is now the northern Chin State. Some moved south to the Yaw valley and the plains adjacent to this valley and were scattered as far as the southern Chin State. Because they moved helter-sketer out of the Kabaw valley, each family or sub-tribe moved forward and went according to convenience and circumstances. They continued to live separately on various hills. The period in which they lived on the Than hills and on the banks of the Run river is between

1300 and 1450 A.D. During this period we hear nothing about warfare or fighting among them.

On the banks of the Run and on the Than hills, the land was steep and rough and unfit for cultivation. It was difficult to make a living to subsist and survive; so they moved farther west and gradually they reached the range of high hills called Lentlang, and the banks of the river Tiau. Here food was plenty and easier to obtain. But here also their villages were set apart and situated on hill tops miles apart, just as they were on the Than hill range and on the banks of the Run river. Communication was impossible, for there were neither roads nor mule tracks. Only jungle paths fit for wild animals were available so the descendants of the Mizo lived their own lives separately in clans and families. Soon differences arose between the various villages, there were scores to settle. That is why in the period between 1450 and 1700 A.D., during their settlement on the Lentlang hills and on the banks of the river Tiau, there was fighting, hostility and bloodshed between the clans and villages.

During the period from 1300 to 1700 A.D., during their sojourn on the Than and Lentlang hills and on the banks of the Run and Tiau rivers, they composed many folk tales and songs on the basis of memory of their elderly which are important and worthy of note.

The various sub-tribes who are the descendants of the Mizo entered Mizoram in different stages, times and periods. The mainstream of the Mizo led by the Sailo chiefs entered the present state of Mizoram in the year 1700 A.D. The majority of them were Luseis; but as we have mentioned before, Hmar, Ralte, Lai (Pawi), Paite, Mara (Lakher) and other clans were included among them. Before they crossed the Tiau river they already had chiefs to rule them. The weaker chiefs and their subjects were the first to cross the Tiau river, and later on the strong chiefs followed. They established villages on the tops of various hills, and gradually they spread out all over the present Mizoram.

Initial Sizeable Villages

To describe the origin, the migrations, settlement and ramification of the Mizo in the present Mizoram is not an easy task. All we can do is to bring to your notice the first three sizeable villages of the Mizo, because they are important and note-worthy.

(a) Dungtlang – Three Thousand Houses

Dungtlang was situated in northeast Mizoram near the Burma border not far from the river Tiau. Just before the Mizos mainstream entered Mizoram, the large village of Dungtlang was already established and existed between the year 1670 to 1680 A.D. The names of the chiefs were Pu Buara, Bulpuia and Huliana. When the Sailo chiefs and their subjects migrated into Mizoram, Pu Buara and his people moved to the southwest as far as Bangla Desh.

Though it was claimed as a village of 3000 houses, yet there are contradictions. Clans and villages would claim much more than their actual number to deter their enemies from raiding them. Secondly, “Dungtlang Three Thousand”, must not be mistaken for another Dungtlang which existed nine decades after their time in 1760. The chief of this other Dungtlang was Vanhnuaithanga, the father of Lianchhiari.

(b) Selesih – Seven Thousand Houses

This is the most famous among the first large villages. It existed between the years 1740 to 1750 A.D. It was situated in and around the present villages of Khawbung(S) and Zawlsei. To counteract the continuous harassing raids upon them by their avowed enemies living in the east across the river Tiau, seven chiefs of the Sailo clan, gathered and established this large village. The names of these seven chiefs were as follows : Pu Kawltha, Darpuiliana, Darliankuala, Rohnaa, Lianchera, Lalhluma and Lalsailova. Among them, Pu Kawlha was regarded as the leader. The famous warriors

and hunters (Pasaltha) Chawnbura and Karhluana; the fastest walker, the flat footed Aihniara; and the most famous Mizo singer Buizova were all contemporaries of Pu Kawlha and lived in Selesih. Their names have been immortalized and are still remembered today.

To describe and explain the immense density of population of Selesih, the elderly used to say, “When they went to work in their cultivation plots, those who set out first encountered and waded through mud, slush and slough even upto their knees; but those who followed after them and were the last to leave the village, encountered dry dust, and their heels raised dust instead of slush!” And that, “When doves flew over Selesih, the doves used to fall down senseless due to the noise and roar of the simultaneous shouting of the inhabitants!”

‘Selesih 7000’ had its many advantages. The most prominent of them the chiefs gained knowledge and experience in ruling a village. The customs, culture and way of life led by the Mizos today had its origin in Selesih. Those who lived in Selesih and even their descendants are more unified than those who did not live there. Their former languages were absorbed, assimilated and similar.

The aura and emination of Selesih was such that it perturbed their enemies and also the other villages and clans in Mizoram. According to their expectations, their enemies on the east of the river Tiau dared not raid or attack them; and other sub-tribes and even some descendants of the Mizos, who were already settled, moved out of Mizoram to east, west, north and south. It would be far from inaccurate to say that this wide expansive land was vacant and convenient for the Mizos under their Sailo chiefs to establish Mizoram, the land of the Mizos.

However, another thing to be noted is that though it was known ‘Selesih Seven Thousand’, it does not mean that it consisted of 7,000 houses. The figure may be exaggerated to deter enemies and to cause them to be diffident; but we can

accept the fact that they had an immense population; and as for the exaggeration in the anecdotes we have written, we should regard them as the Mizo way of exaggerating things and it will relax our minds.

(c) Tualte – During Its Hey Day

Tualte stood third among the sizeable villages mentioned by our elders. The exact date of its origin and establishment cannot be traced, but it was in existence in the year 1861. It had a large population, it consisted of 1,000 houses, and their chief was Vanhnuailiana.

To explain their large population, they also told exaggerated stories just as was done by Selesih 7,000 before them. One of the signs of its greatness was that ‘Tualte in its hey-day’ had many famous warriors and hunters. Vanhnuailiana inherited these famous courageous, chivalrous, courteous, altruistic warriors and hunters from his father Lalsavunga. There were twelve of heroic personalities, namely : Vanapa, Chawngduma, Keihawla, Tawkthiala, Zampuimanga, Chhunkeuva, Darbuta, Chalkhenga, Darruma, Darphawka, Darkuala and Zabiaka. One remarkable fact which makes this large village prominent is an expression used upto the present day. At the end of an incredible narration or legend the speaker would say, “Well, that’s what they said in Tualte in its hey-day!”

A terrible famine fell in Mizoram. It happened in the year 1861, and was caused by a “Mautam,” of which we will discuss later. Due to this great famine they could not continue to live together and ‘Tualte in its hey-day’ with its pleasures and happy days came to an end! The inhabitants dispersed, scattered and formed small villages far far apart.

Events in Mizoram Between the Year 1700 to 1930

During these years so many events took place in Mizoram. It will not be possible to mention all of them. Let us take a view of some of the prominent ones.

(a) Massacre of the Thlanrawn

After leaving Selesih 7,000, Lallula took possession of a number of hillocks where earthen pots could be baked, and established the village called Zopui. It was situated where the village of Samthanga now stands, near the boundary of Vaphai village. With the fixed idea and intention of establishing a large village, Lallula's actions centred around this idea. When he defeated other villages, he brought captives home, and made them dwell in his village to enhance it. Because he ruled his village well and knew the art of gathering subjects, his village grew large and wide. In 1760, Zopui became a highly populated village. The pleasant life they led can be visualized from the 'Chai' song they used to sing. The Chai songs were sung when they danced the Chai Dance, in which the youngmen and maidens formed a circle and sang. A man inside the circle served rice beer while others also inside the circle played a drum and beat two gayal horns together.

*Zopui village extends far and wide,
Its chief in the centre resides.*

*Zopui is prominent far and wide,
Let no wild beast and death come aside.*

They sang heartily with mirth and joy!

During that time, the Thlanrawn sub-tribe who lived in the east across the river Tiau, were the most troublesome. The Thlawnrawns kept long hair and tied it in a knot at the top of their heads. They used to take tribute and collect taxes from Zopui and other villages in the area. They took clothing, black yarn (or mithun) elephant tusks, brass gongs and even domesticated animals or whatever they took a fancy to. If the villagers refused to give tribute, or if the Thlanrawns were not satisfied with what was given to them, they intimidated the villagers by slashing and cutting them with long knives. There is an old folk song which goes like this :

*Foes with topknots are hard to hold back,
My mithun follows the Tiau river track!*

*You are so great Phunthanga,
You tax all the villages,
Wield your sword – ay – o.*

*Garbed with brass and with a shield,
Thlanrawn Thanchhum is so great,
Lording Mizos – ay – o.*

This maltreatment was done so often that Lallula found it irksome and difficult to bear. He decided to crush these tax collectors and devised a plan to massacre them in his village. He explained his plan to his people and sent a message to Thanchhuma, the chief of the Thlanrawn to come and take many elephant tusks, gongs, brass and other things which they wished to give him. He also told him to come with many followers to carry all this wealth. And so, Thanchhuma and his most prominent and senior village elder, the cruel Phunthanga accompanied by a large retinue went to Zopui in response to the invitation.

Lallula had already explained his plan to the people in the nearby villages; and so at dusk many men entered Zopui carrying the cores of banana trees on their heads. To the Thlanrawn, who were watching from a distance, it appeared like elephant tusks and they were delighted.

On the day set for this occasion, animals were killed and the inhabitants of the village and their guests enjoyed a great feast. The Thlanrawn were made to imbibe a lot of ‘zu’ (alcoholic drink) as if they were being favoured.

When it was midnight, the time set for the massacre, Thanchhuma and Phunthanga who were the guests of the chief, became captives of Lallula. The chief beat a gong which was a signal to kill all the Thlanrawn in their drunken sleep. The intoxicated, inebriated guests were slashed and stabbed. There was great confusion, and except for one or two who managed

to escape, the rest were massacred; and Thanchhuma and Phunthanga whose wrists were securely tied, were handled roughly, degradingly punished and ridiculed. Lallula composed a song of victory, which was sung by all his subjects, to the discomfort, chagrin and humiliation of the Thlanrawn chief and his elder :

*Phunthang craved elephant tusks,
So Thanchhum now wears handcuffs
How degrading - aw e.*

*Blame not our Zokhuna ever,
For Thlanrawn heads we served,
Withered Phanpuis – aw e.*

They sang with great gusto and zest! (Phanpui is a large tree whose wood is durable. Withered Phanpuis means – ‘How the mighty have fallen!’).

Lallula soon realized that Zopui was not a safe place for him. He believed that the Thlanrawn would be scheming to take revenge. When all the other Mizo chiefs and their subjects had moved away to the north and south Mizoram, he boasted :

*Like frightened to north and south they veered,
Fearless and handsome Lallula,
At Zopui I yet cover their rare.*

(b) War Between North and South

In Mizo history, the best remembered event is the war between north and south, which took place from 1849 to 1856. This is the story of war between the descendants of Lallula and the descendants of Lalrivunga. The northerners were the descendants of Lallula. Their leaders were Vanhnuailiana, his younger brothers and his maternal uncle. They lived in the villages of Hualtu and Vancheng. The leaders of the southerners were Lalpuithanga, Thangdula and Thuama, living in Vanchengte.

The two main reasons for the outbreak of this war was a quarrel over the possession of land and the composition of a mocking or scoffing song.

There are the events that led to the war. After the northern chief Vuta had defeated the Zadeng sub-tribe, he moved from Arthlawr to Khumtung. From there he moved south again and established a large village and called it Hualtu. At that time he was already prosperous and quite rich. His residence was 600 feet long and 60 feet wide. He was loud in speech and actions and his fame had spread far. From Hualtu, Vuta decided to move farther south, so he built a hut or temporary house at Buanhmun to establish a new village.

At that time a chief of the south, a descendant of Lalrivunga, whose name was Lalpuithanga said, "In case our southern brethern will advertantly be not daring enough to move northwards, I shall go and live adjacent to them." To be close up to Vuta who was at that time in Hualtu, Lalpuithanga shifted his village from Sailam to Chhiahtlang, from there he moved again to Vanchengte where he settled down.

Before Vuta could occupy the temporary house he had built at Buanhmun, Lalpuithanga out stripped and forestalled him and occupied it first. When Vuta heard about this he was furious. He exclaimed, "The impudence of this Lalpuithanga! I, the builder of that temporary house, will undoubtedly occupy it! We'll go and live together with them; follow me, my people!"

Deliberately, purposely and willfully he moved his village and people to Buanhmun, not feeling easy in his mind, Lalpuithanga returned in haste to Vanchengte. This is the very incident about which Vuta composed his scoffing song mocking Lalpuithanga :

*After possessing Buanhmun,
Scuttled back to Chengte soon,
Lalpuithang – the little!*

He composed mockingly. When Lalpuithanga heard this song,

he became angry and resentful. From that time onwards, Vuta and Lalpuithanga opposed each other in every way. The war of the north and south had begun to simmer.

The beginning of the war and the sound of the first gun shots came to pass in this way. A gun which belonged to Vuta's village had been taken and was kept in Lalpuithanga's house. With the intention of taking the gun back by force, Vuta and his nephew Thawmvunga went to Lalpuithanga's house. The southerners knew about their intention and many of them gathered and collected at Vanchengte village. They had already devised a plan, that when Lalpuithanga remonstrated Vuta about the song he had composed, the most resolute and steadfast among them was to smite Vuta suddenly without warning.

When Vuta and Thawmvunga arrived, as was the custom of a Mizo chief, zu was served and they drank the zu by sucking it through a bamboo tube. The reception was held in Lalpuithanga's house. It was then that he expostulated :

*"After possessing Buanhmun,
Scuttled back to Chengte soon,
Lalpuithang – the littles!*

Did you compose that Vut-potbelly? "Vuta must have been afraid, for he said, "I did not say, 'Lalpuithang – the little, I said, Lalpuithang – did settle."

His nephew, the brave Thawmvunga, could not bear it and said, "Oh, oh, oh uncle Vut, are you scared of him? 'Lalpuithang the little, the little, the little!' that was what we said. Move aside, I'm going to dance. I can never dance without a sword...". He drew his long knife out of its scabbard and started to dance. While dancing, he chanted the words of Vuta's song and exclaimed, 'Sing! sing! every body!' He wielded and swung his sword above their heads, almost shaving the tops of their heads. Big and small, tall and short they became all the same height! While dancing, the fireshelf (rapchung), came down with a crash!

The gun they came to claim and take away, was standing against the wall. Thawmvunga took it without ceremony and went off homewards without taking leave. Lalpuithanga's village elders chased him, caught him and they tried to take the gun from him. He firmly refused to give it back. They quarrelled over the gun and a tug-of-war ensued, with Thawmvunga holding tight the slender part of the gun stock and the elders gripping the end of the barrel. "You can't just take it away. I'm going home," Thawmvunga shouted angrily. They refused to comply, so he unsheathed his long knife and trimmed the gun barrel. They had to let go and he ran off with it. The subjects of Lalpuithanga arrived on the scene and they fired a volley after him, but in vain. The firing of these guns was a declaration of war, and it ushered in the war of the north and south.

In the war between the north and the south, they attacked each other incessantly. The north made a raid on Vanchengte village, but it was not successful. Their force was weak and they had to retreat; and in their hurry Vanhnuailiana lost a vakul (*bhimraj*) tail feather from the plume of his headdress!

The south raided Hmuntha. The south again raided the village of Sailam led by the famous warrior of the south, Chawngbawla. Inversely, led by the famous warrior of the north, Nghatebaka, the north put the southerners to rout and chase them. A youth in flight among the southerners exclaimed sarcastically, "Oh, how I wish Chawngbawla was with us! If only he was with us we would not have been routed!" Chawngbawla is not his usual self!" After they had run quite a distance, Chawngbawla ambushed and shot Nghatebaka to death.

After their incessant raids on each other, sometimes one and sometimes the other was successful.

The Raid on Khawlung

Khawlung was the village of the south, and its chief was Thuama. The village was surrounded by cliffs and the only

exit and entrance was across a movable bridge which spanned a deep rocky crevice. It was not an easy task to enter or raid the village. Not far from Khawnglung, there was a village called Khuanghlum. Its chief was Khawtindala and he and his subjects were of the Mizo-Fanai sub-tribe. The leader of the northerners, Vuta had managed to make the people of Khuanghlum his allies.

One night, the sons of Vuta accompanied by the Fanai of Khuanghlum village set out to raid Khawnglung. On that particular night, the watchman of the village forgot to pull in the movable bridge. At midnight, the sons of Vuta and their allies, walked across the bridge; and soon they were stealthily approaching the village. Just before day break, they reached the village and attacked it. They rushed into Zawlbuk (a dormitory for youngmen which was quite convenient in times of emergency) and trained their guns from Bawhbel (a log which separates outside and inside of Zawlbuk. They shouted mockingly, "You, youngmen of Khawnglung, have overslept. Get up!" And so saying, some of the raiders bombarded the sleeping youngmen with bundles of faggots, which were conveniently at their disposal near the entrance of the Zawlbuk. The youngmen woke up in confusion; and as they stood up the raiders shot them mercilessly. The youngmen fell down groaning in a disorderly heap. The raiders killed almost all of them!

Many women were killed in lanes and streets of the village. There was blood everywhere! Many children and young ladies were taken as captives and led away. It was so terrifying that an inhabitant of Khawnglung composed this song:

*The topknots I cannot hold back like a fence,
Children of Khawnglung captured thence,
And led away hence.*

A maiden named Thanghniangi was also led away into captivity. Fortunately, her sweetheart Chalthanga survived the massacre. When hostilities subsided and the war came to an

end; he set out to look for his beloved Thanghniangi across the river Tiau. After a long search, he was successful. He espied her, dressed in rags, sad and downhearted. She was thinking about his beloved and singing while on her way to work in a jhoom (a cultivation plot) owned by the person who had led her into captivity.

A true love story was written and published about this incidence. And much later, a dramatical play evolved, in which Thanghniangi sings with great pathos, to the tune of ‘clementine’:

*Oh, I wonder and always will,
Does my Chalthang love me still?*

And Chalthanga answered:

*Yes, I love you and always will,
Dear Thanghniang, I love you still.*

And there followed a tearful but joyous reunion!

The war between the north and south lasted six long years. In many raids the south did better than the north; but in the Khawnglung massacre, the north did better and were the victors. None of the two gave up, neither did they come to any agreement. The war just petered out. It went on for so long that both sides became weak; and finally a terrible famine called ‘Mautam’ broke out and created problems on both sides. Ultimately, the war came to an end.

(c) War Between East and West

Another important event which took place in Mizoram was the war between east and west. It took place between the year 1877 to 1888. It was fought between the descendants of Lalsavunga and Manga. They were cousins, for both their fathers were brothers.

There were two main reasons for its outbreak. The first was rivalry between two chiefs. They both wanted the same girl as a daughter-in-law. Vanhnualialiana, the chief of Lungdup, went to

Nisapui village to make arrangements for the wedding of his second son Liankhama to the beautiful daughter of the chief of Chenkual sub-clan. The name of the beautiful bride-to-be was Tuali. After completing the arrangements and fixing the date for the wedding, Vanhnuailiana returned to Lungdup.

In the meantime, Suakpuiliana who desired the lovely Tuali for his son Kalkhama, managed to obtain the prize; and Kalkhama and Tuali were married in haste. When Vanhnuailiana heard about it, he was furious. On his death bed he told his sons that they must never forget this outrageous incident!

The second reason was the breaking of a promise. When Lalsavunga's descendants decided to move to the east to establish new villages, Suakpuilala, Kalkhama's father, decided to remain in the west with his people. But he promised to support the descendants of Lalsavunga if they were unable to subsist and return from the east. He vowed that he would allow them to establish villages again in the west.

When those who settled in the east were unable to subsist and asked for aid, they were rebuffed. When Pawibawia who was in the east, wanted to live with his people in Khawruhlian, which was a tributary hamlet village of Kalkhama, he gave a number of lame excuses and finally refused permission. This incidence vexed Liankhama. He was offended, and he also remembered the exhortation and parting words given to them by his father just before his demise.

Events That Instigated the War

One day, the chief of Thingsulthliah Liankunga exclaimed, "The easterners are gradually and surreptitiously moving in upon our lands! Soon they'll be trampling us and taking all our land!" Liankunga was the son of Liankhama and the beautiful Tuali. To stop the influx of the easterners, Liankunga sent for his grandfather – the cunning, crafty, subtle Suakpuilala. The old man took over the responsibilities of ruling Thingsulthliah, and Liankunga established a village at Muthi.

The shifting, moving and hopping nearer of the large western villages towards them stiffened the minds of the easterners and soon the villages of the east and west were arrayed against each other.

The area of Tachhip was a sort of no man's land between them, and Suakpuilala moved to Tachhip with the intention of starting a new village. Liankhama of the east encouraged his youngest brother Buangtheuva, who was the chief of Hmunpui, to attack Suakpuilala at Tachhip, saying that they would all help if fighting ensured. The son of Suakpuilala, Lianphunga, who was settled at Parvatui, received intimation of his father's predicament. At once he went to Tachhip. He told his father to move back west-ward and to stay at Tanhril. He and his subjects started clearing the jungle to prepare cultivation plots.

Buangtheuva of Hmunpui attacked and chased them away. Lianphunga and his men went again to resume clearing the jungle, and Buangtheuva and his followers set out to put them to rout a second time; but the artful astute and Lianphunga ambushed them and managed to shoot and kill one of them. Consequently, the famous war of the east and west was launched and set in motion.

This incident was followed by raids and hostilities against each other. Liankhama raided Kalkhama's village Hmuizawl. The raid was not very successful. Alternately, Liankhama and his people raided Liankunga's village Muthi. The raid was inopportune and they were surrounded by Liankunga's forces. With great difficulty they were able to get out of this predicament.

The westerners of Tachhip village raided Ruanzawl. They waited outside the village to ambush the inhabitants of Ruanzawl. When they came out to go to their jhooms, they fired at them with their guns, killed many and also captured some of them alive. Among those were killed was a young maiden named Chhingpuii, who was famous for her comeliness. They even composed a song about their prowess:



Mizo dances have been evolved for community involvement and participation. Khualam is the dance of the guest. It is normally performed by men dressed in traditional Mizo clothes with red and green stripes. During various ceremonies guests dance Khuallam while entering the arena.



Chhailam is a dance which embodies the spirit of joy and exhilaration. It is performed in the evening when the day's work is over. People squat on the floor in a circle while the dancers stand in the middle reciting a song with various movements of limbs and body. It is performed to the accompaniment of beats of a drum or bamboo tube or clapping of hands.



Chai is a festival dance. Men and women stand one after another in a circle, holding each other on the shoulder and the nape. They sway to and fro and swing their feet to the tune of the song, sung in chorus by all of them. Drummer and gongman beat their instruments. Chai presents a grand show.





Mizo used to bound the skulls with cane to hold them together. The warriors fixed them on the wall of their front verandah to exhibit. This was regarded as great work.



During farming season, a large temporary hut was erected at a central spot near jhooms and a water-hole. When jhooms were at a distance from the village, farmers used to live here like a big family. For youngsters, this was a personality building exercise. They learnt Mizo altruism, self-denial, chivalry, industry, behaviour, obedience etc.

*We slew her fore'er to sleep,
Brave men our sword we did sweep,
And caused your Chhingpuii's parents to weep.*

*"We're brave," you say, easterners,
While fighting you dropped her,
Your pride and joy-hornbill in flight's feather.*

They used to sing; and it became the subject of conversation all over the land.

Using the slaying of Chhingpuii as its theme, a youngman of Tachhip wrote a well known Mizo novel which was published. The author was Kaphleia (born 1910 and died 1940). He created a character to be the sweetheart of Chhingpuii and named him "Kaptluanga." Moreover, the novel was written in 1939 and now used for the College Text Book in Mizoram.

There was no famous warrior among the westerners; but the easterners had brave, chivalrous, courageous men such as Vana Pa, Papua and Zabiaka on their side. In the east and west were well matched and that nobody won that war, which was terminated by a horrible famine called "Thingtam". It was followed by the entry of the British into Mizoram, and the war of the east and west came to an end.

(d) Famine (Mautam)

Among the terrible events that took place in Mizoram are the Mautam famines, which cannot be ignored when we talk about Mizoram. Mautam means the 'Death of the Bamboos'. Every 50 year all the bamboos blossoms and flowers bear fruits, and then all the bamboos die. This incident happening at regularly period was given the name of 'The death of all the bamboos', (Mautam). The Mautam in itself is not so important. Other things which coincided with it and their consequences, made the Mautam terrible and remarkable.

When the bamboos fruits and died, like attacks of locusts in other countries, swarms of small beetles, about the size of

a grain of maize plagued the land. The beetle is called 'Thangnang' in Mizo language. These beetles appear in the fall or autumn. They were so numerous that when they came to rest upon the trees, their weight caused the branches to snap and break off! Besides these beetles, countless rats made their appearance. They were also in huge numbers that they seemed to cover the whole land. Those rats began to devour all the paddy in the jhooms. Whole plots of paddy disappeared overnight.

Due to those events, a terrible famine broke out and food became scarce. As far as we know, there had been three Mautam-famines in Mizoram and they happened every fifty years. Let us take a glance at those three Mautams.

(i) The First Famine

The first Mautam experienced by our forefathers happened in the year 1861. Since the whole of Mizoram suffered this terrible famine, there was no place or village where they could go to, to fetch or buy rice, their staple food. They dug up wild yams, they stripped wild banana trees for the core, and subsisted on soft leaves in lieu of rice. All kinds of sickness, disease and epidemics broke out. It is said that even the pigs could not stand without leaning against a fence and that they were so hungry that they were grimacing all the time!

Not much is known about this famine of 1861. We also know that the famous village 'Tualte in its hey-day' was broken up and its inhabitants died due to this first Mautam famine.

(ii) The Second Famine

Fifty years after the first Mautam, the second Mautam took place in the year 1911. We are more informed and sure about this famine. According to what the elderly said, the fore-runners of the famine – the Thangnang beetles started to multiply during the years 1909-1910. They approached their destinations only by night, and when they were in flight, the roaring and droning sound

produced, was like the falling of countless hailstones and when they landed on the trees in the forests, the branches bent and they almost broke.

The bamboos started bearing fruits and dying east of the Tuirini river in the year 1910. But in the west, on the Hachhek range of hills and around Kawrthah, the harvest of paddy was plentiful. In almost every village in the west, some families harvested over 500 loads (baskets), some harvested 500 and some 400. The government ordered the surplus paddy to be brought to the village of Bunghmun. They were able to collect and accumulate over 1000 loads.

In 1911 the second Mautam began. It was grim and serious. It seemed as if all the bamboos and trees were dead. The bamboo fruit attracted hordes of rats. The rats devoured all the bamboo fruit. In autumn they started gobbling the paddy plants. Seen from a distance huge plantation plots which were given at first, became pale, jaundiced, yellow straw, when the rats had bitten and destroyed them. The rats multiplied fast and became numerous. Paddy almost ready to be harvested in huge plantation plots simply disappeared overnight.

The government counteracted vigorously to destroy the rats and rewarded those who killed the rats and brought the tails to claim the rewards. Upto the 31st of March 1913, 179,015 tails were severed and shown to the government and reward money distributed was more than Rupees 1,532. Paddy rice were scarce and there was a constant flow of people rushing to and fro, to carry away the paddy the government had collected and kept at Bunghmun. At that time the population of Mizoram was 91,024, and the government paddy at Bunghmun was a great help.

Using boats and barges, the government transported rice to Tlabung, Sairang and Tippaimukh. To accomplish this the British government spent more than Rupees 539,927. Starving people living in villages far away, rushed to carry that rice. At that time the price of one Maund (37 kg.) cost five Rupees and ten annas (5 rupees and 62 naya paisa).

The rice taken by the people was a loan and when the time came for them to settle their debts, many of them had no money so they had to become coolies and paid their debts by doing forced labour. In groups they left their villages to do forced labour in Aijal (Aizawl). The most outstanding work done by them was the digging of the Aizawl Water Reservoir (situated above the Chief Minister's Residence). It was a difficult, exacting, strenuous task. It was so painful, toilsome, miserable and unpleasant, that it was indelibly printed in their minds. The forced labour they suffered to repay the 'loan of alien rice' was never to be forgotten atrocity the Mizo have ever had to bear and it was caused by the mautam famine.

Another consequence effect and outcome of the 1911 famine was that large number of people left Mizoram. Some to avoid the approaching famine, some who were aversed to repaying the load for the alien rice and some who were disgusted and fed up being coolies and doing forced labour. Those living in the northeast fled to Cachar State and settled in and around Lakhipur. Those from the northwest left Hachhek hill range to settle in the Cachar hills; those living in the west ran away to Tripura State. Later they were all disinclined and reluctant to return to Mizoram. They preferred and decided to stay where they were for good. There were others also who had gone and settled there before the year 1910.

(iii) The Third Famine

In the year 1958 the land of the Tuirini river was again the first to suffer a Mautam famine. Like the second famine, all the bamboos in the east died, so 1958 could be regarded as the year of the Third Mautam in the east. But in 1959 the whole of Mizoram began to suffer the consequences of this Mautam. In the year 1958 rats had been moving in to feed on the fruit of the bamboos. Mizoram was again beginning to face difficulties and suffering caused by these rodents.

In 1959, the areas where lovely bamboo clumps, groves and forests used to sway, were converted into Mautam areas. As far

as the eye could see it was all like a jungle cut down and dry, ready to be burnt and the land made into a cultivation plot. And as for the influx of the plague of rats, it was worse than 'Phungvelh.' (The Mizo believed that if you beat a 'phung' which is a female spook or bogey which has pendulous breasts, it doubles, trebles and multiples). Well, the number of rats was worse than 'Phungvelh.' The hungry hordes of rats rushed headlong to wherever there was food waiting for them.

Describing what he saw, Pu Sanga of Lunglei village said, "I was late in the evening and I was on my way home from Tlangnuam village, when I came upon a terrible spectacle! Countless rats were rushing down and crossing the road in front of me. It was literally raining rats! When they had all passed by, the roads was ruttled, furrowed and grooved as if a herd of wild pigs had crossed the road!" And once, during the rainy season, a great number of rats swam across the swollen, muddy Tlawng river which was in spate. Some of them drowned and the dead rats floated down stream as far as Bairabi. The number of dead rats could not be counted.

In 1959 there were many educated people among the Mizo, and the government was more dependable. To save Mizoram and to relieve it from hunger and death, the government of India and Assam, using aeroplanes, trucks and boats transported rice to Mizoram. They ordered all kinds of poisons and used them to kill a large number of rats.

Another thing which cannot be omitted is that before the Third Famine broke out, to make early preparations for fighting it, a "Mizo National Famine Organization" headed by Pu C. Rokhuma was established on the 21st July 1951. Twenty six persons consisting of government officials and prominent citizens were chosen to be members of this organization. Pu C. Rokhuma was the founder and Organising Secretary and Central Government of India appointed this organization as the "Honorary Crop Report Agency. Pu C. Rokhuma did many things through this organization. To guard against and to relieve

the people from famine, he set forth rules and also asked for aid from the government. The government appointed him to receive and distribute the rice they sent to Mizoram. The government and the people at large did their utmost, so no one died due to hunger during this Third Famine. For this special work in relieving Mizoram from the suffering it faced and for giving himself whole-heartedly to this task, it is our obligation to remember this always.

(e) Thingam (Threengtarm)

A species of bamboo called 'Rawthing' (*Bambusa Tulda* or *valgaris*) died after flowering. The fruit the flowers bore are about the size of a big long grain of rice. Rats are very partial to it, and when there was no more Rawthing fruit, they started to devour the paddy in the paddy cultivation plot and that caused the famine called "Thingam." Mizoram has suffered three Thingams. Let us take a glance at them.

(i) The First

Like the Mautam, the first Thingam commenced with a plague of Thangnang beetles. The coming of numerous rats followed it. In 1880 the rats ate up all the paddy and in 1881 there was no rice whatever for consumption. It is said that the suffering caused during this famine was worse than the Mautam. Rice was so scarce that the price of a beautiful bride was paddy just enough to fill a 'Tumphit' (A small bamboo musical instrument, like one used by Pan, the mischievous god – half goat half man – of the Greek). We will explain Tumphit in another chapter. The price of an 'Awlan silai' (March lock gun made in Holland) was paddy which could fill only one of these bamboo pipes.

Due to the extreme shortage of rice, mothers with infants had no milk in their breasts. Due to their diet of wild yam, stumps of banana plants and soft leaves, epidemics broke out and many succumbed to these diseases. In some villages, whole

families died and it is said that some families just simply died in their sleep due to hunger. It is also said that the death toll was so great, that they were unable to bury the corpses and some cadavers were just left to decompose and rot without burial!

Though the British were not ruling Mizoram at that time, they wrote an account which started that 8000 maunds of rice and 2000 maunds of paddy were brought into Mizoram from Cachar, that the government spent Rupees 1,240 in aid of the famine victims, that some families shifted to Cachar to escape, avoid and dodge the famine and returned to Mizoram in the year 1881 to start working in their jhooms (cultivation plots) and to sow their annual crops.

(ii) The Second

In the autumn of 1929, rats increased and multiplied again. Dark green plants seen from afar were becoming more and more red day by day, and it was realized immediately that thousands of rats were in the process of eating and destroying the paddy. The blow of the famine came in 1930. The people had already suffered and experienced the Mautam famine, and knowing its effects and results, they knew how to prepare for it in advance. Two years before the famine, they had stocked, saved up and guarded a large amount of paddy. Consequently, there was no difficulty regarding food and there was no need for the government to help them.

For those who faced hunger in Aizawl and the surrounding villages, the well to do who were living in Aizawl, ordered for rice from the plains in India. The rice was transported by boat to Sairang and then again by bullock carts to Aizawl. In this way they were able to endure and live through to the end of the famine without too much strain, worry and anxiety.

(iii) The Third

In the autumn of 1977, the rats again started destroying the

paddy plants. The “State Level Rodent Control Committee” which had been established in 1975 was enlarged the next year in 1976. The Committee resolutely planned and set forth measures to exterminate the rats; to obtain the poison for the purpose and to teach and train the people and also to accept and follow out the plans made by Pu C. Rokhuma.

The people were unified in their efforts to exterminate the rats. The work and efforts of Pachhunga College, Champhai College, Serchhip College and some of the High Schools are worth mentioning. The report of the killing of rats for the year 1976 in the whole of Mizoram was 553,045 and the total in the year 1977 came up to 6,216,616.

Pu C. Rokhuma was appointed Honorary Secretary and headed the Mizo National Famine Organization from the Development Commissioner’s office during the year 1976-1977. He worked incessantly to find ways and means to safeguard the people against the Thingtam Famine. His work was useful, helpful and invaluable.

The 1977 famine was not as terrible and unbearable as the one in 1959. The reason for this was that there was a great decrease of Rawthing (*Bambusa julda*) in Mizoram. The government supplied sufficient rice as was necessary and roads and other facilities for communication had also improved a lot; so the inhabitants of Mizoram were able to live through the famine without much suffering.

The terrible famine called the Mautam occurred regularly every fifty years. The Thingtam also happened every fifty years.

(f) Bad Wind

A raging storm of which our ancestors had neither known nor experienced since long ago, took place in Mizoram at the end of autumn of the year 1878. It has never been known to blow again after that. It was a strange wind that caused great damage, so they name it the “Thli chhe tleh” (Bad Wind). The path of that wind was irregular, and its force was not so

strong at the beginning. It blew the whole night and at dawn its force increased and got stronger and stronger till it reached violent proportion.

From the time it began to blow up until day-break it destroyed little or nothing. After daybreak it commenced blowing down things in its path. Next it broke houses snapping off halves of houses in its wide path; some houses only lost the cover of their ridgings. In the end, it could be said that all the houses of every village were damaged. No house or village was spared. Besides that, all the paddy plants in the jhooms were blown down and flattened; but fortunately, the paddy was almost ripe and ready for harvesting, so the people neither faced nor suffered a famine.

A remarkable thing about the cyclone that passed once and for all, is that every year, many cretins, halfwits, idiots, nitwits, simpletons and urtlings were born than in the years before 1878. That is why it has always been remembered, known and spoken of as the “Year of the Bad Wind.”

(g) Shooting Star

One night, in the year 1886, in the month of August, just before bedtime, an exceedingly large number of stars fell from the sky towards the earth. With great astonishment and wonder everybody watched this astronomical display of fire-works. The falling, flying, shooting stars did not seem to reach the earth. It lasted for more than an hour. Due to this extraordinary, exceptional and outstanding event, the year 1886 is signified by the Mizos as “Arsi Tlak” (The Year the Stars Fell).

(h) Great Landslides

The elderly people say that there were great landslides long long ago in Mizoram, but we do not know the date nor the consequences of these landslides.

In the year 1929, from the month of April, the monsoon was heavy and worse than in any other years. From the first to the

12th June it rained incessantly. From the 9th to the 12th the rain was so heavy that the meteorological instruments for measuring the rainfall in Aizawl overflowed. The amount of rainfall could not be measured at that time.

Due to the heavy rain the streams were in spate and on the 10th of June, terrible landslides occurred. Day and night, the roaring sounds of the landslides could be heard and it was so devastating as to change the topography of the land! In some areas the hillsides split and the lower parts slid downwards causing crevices and deep rifts. Even flat surfaces of land cracked and split and broke apart! Many roads were blocked and transport and communication between towns and villages came to a stand still. Three areas that suffered the worst were the land west of the river Tlawng; Saitual and Hmunpui. The villages that were hit badly by the landslides were exempted from paying the annual tax for that year to the government.

This particular occurrence of landslides was the worst that Mizoram had ever experienced. So the year 1929 is known, marked, remembered and spoken of as the “Minpui Kum” (Year of the Landslides).

Entry of the British

According to our ancestors, the word ‘Vai’ in Mizo means ‘Alien’ or anyone who is not a Mizos. ‘Kawlvai’, so when the British invaded Mizoram the invasion was called ‘Vailian’ or ‘Vailen’ (Alien or Foreign Invasion). Mizoram was invaded by Indian soldiers led by British officers. The soldiers addressed their white leaders as ‘Sahib’, so all white skinned Europeans and also Army and government officers in high positions of authority came to be known as and given the appellation of ‘Sap’. However, nowadays the word ‘Vai’ is used to denote Indians (People of India-Hindus, Muslim etc.)

There were many reconnaissances, excursions and expeditions of the British into Mizoram, but we will concern ourselves with

the two important entries of the British into Mizoram, because they led to the annexation of Mizoram by the British.

(a) First Entry

The whole of Burma which was lay adjacent to and on the east of Mizoram was annexed and ruled by the British in the year 1885. In the year 1835, the British were already enthroned and ruling the people of Manipur, lying adjacently north of Mizoram. There is no need to narrate the history of India on the west: about the East India Company, the black hole of Calcutta, Clive and a host of others. It is suffice to say that the colonizers were already known there as the British Raja. In the south and southwest they had already firmly and fiercely colonized Assam, Tripura and Chittagong as far back as 1765. In 1841, the British controlled, oversaw and managed tea plantations in Assam, and later they did the same in Cachar in the year 1853.

Briefly, in the year 1870; Mizo were well settled and spread over Mizoram as follows: The area in the north was occupied by the descendants of Lallula. The area in the northeast was inhabited by the descendants of Manga. The descendants of Lallianvunga – Lalphunga, Vanhnuailiana and Vuta were located in the north-west. The ‘Lai’ chiefs and their people were lodged in the lowlands in the southwest and the descendants of Rolura occupied the hills. The descendants of Lianlula lived in the west; and the Thangluah chiefs and their subjects were to be found in the south-west.

(i) *The Reasons of Their Entry*

According to a report written in 1854, Mizo had raided the villages in the plains of India 19 times between the year 1837 to 1854. They had killed 107 persons and took 186 captives. In another report, it is written that between 1854 and 1972, they had added to their atrocities by raiding the plains not less than another 9 times. They had slain another 242 persons and had taken another 191 captives and not less than 13 firearms.

Among these raids, the raid that caused the British to be most furious was the one led by chief Bengkhuaia. He and his men raided and attacked Alexandrapore and Katlichera during January 1871. They slew an English-man named James Winchester who was living on a tea plantation and abducted his 5 years old daughter Mary Winchester, and carried her off to Mizoram.

The reason why the Mizo used to attack all those around them was not because they were ferocious. The first reason, it seems, is that inside Mizoram itself, the villages were at loggerheads with each other and always raiding each other, so those who were not with them were against them and all those who were not on their side were their enemies. And so, in a sudden encounter they regarded strangers as their enemies. Their policy and habit was to strike before being struck at; to shoot before asking questions.

The second reason was that when they came to Mizoram from the east, their aim was to move further west or to expand their territories for posterity and their generations unborn. So to them the Raja of Tripura or Tipperah and the Rajas of Manipur, together with the British Raj were obstacles obstructing them in their intentions.

Nevertheless, the British decided to take revenge on the Mizo for daring to raid and attack the level lands. Their intention was to deprive the Mizo of the guns they had taken away and to free the captives, especially Mary Winchester (whom the Mizo had already named Zoluti). The British entered Mizoram to settle the score and to punish them for giving trouble to their prosperous trade and business, namely the tea plantations. Using two columns, like a pincer movement, they named this excursion "The Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872."

(ii) The Right Column

Our forefathers called this the "Entry of foreigners from the south" (Chhim Vailian). On 8 October 1871, soldiers and a large number of coolies headed by General Brownlow departed from

Chittagong on their way to Mizoram. Co. T.H. Lewin accompanied them as a Political Officer. They forced their way through Tlabung (Demagiri) and seven other villages. The Chief of these villages were Lianggura, Vanlula, Lalhlira, and Lalzika. Their main objective was Bengkhuaia's village where they intended to free and take back Mary Winchester. Without firing a shot Bengkhuaia relinquished the English child on the 21 January 1872. She had spent almost one year in Mizoram. Partly satisfied and mollified the Right Column returned to Chittagong.

It is said about Mary Winchester that not a hair on her head was harmed, for the Mizo were and are very fond of children. At that time childhood days were spent eating, playing, sleeping and doing a few light chores. Mary was reluctant to leave Bengkhuaia's house, her new friends and the village where she had lived as in a dream. It is also said that she had acquired the habit of liquid snuff (Tuibur). But this is hearsay.

The Right Column set fire, burnt and razed 20 Mizo Villages. The Mizo did their utmost to safeguard their land. They put obstacles in the path of their enemies and in some convenient places, rocks and stones were sent rolling and tumbling down upon the heads of the invading forces. Five chiefs met at Vanlula's house to hold a council of war and to discuss the situation. In a tirade they exclaimed hotly and vehemently, "Let them get out of our land at once, otherwise we'll assault them!"

Gen. Brownlow was dissatisfied and piqued at the perfunctory in which the Mizos chiefs had treated him and had refused to set their captives free, when he had negotiated with them. So he sent two companies of soldiers to Mizoram again on 15 February 1872. Among the soldiers there was a political officer named T.H. Lewin (to the Mizo, he was known as Thangliana). When the soldiers had camped at night, a Mizo surreptitiously infiltrated and entered his tent, woke him up and gave him a message telling him that the great and prominent Mizo chiefs would be gathered together on the opposite bank of a stream called the Tuldung, and that he was to come alone to meet them.

T.H. Lewin was very apprehensive about this, but in the end he decided that catching the bull by the horns and meeting face to face with the more powerful of the Mizo chiefs to negotiate with them was the best way to deal with the situation. Finally he went alone to carry out this resolution. On his way to the Tuldung stream, ten Mizo youngmen carrying guns followed behind him, but he continued on his way as if he was unaware of their presence. The bridge across the Tuldung was a big log 18 feet long. Row upon row of Mizo stood on the opposite bank. Some carried guns, while others had spears. T.H. Lewin walked gingerly across the long bridge and alighted on the opposite bank.

A respectable old man with a white beard welcomed him and led him through the banks. Close by the chief's other leaders were seated in a circle. One of the chiefs, Savunga handed over his gun to Lewin. Bengkhuaia also gave Lewin his sword, but Lewin returned them to the owners immediately, denoting that they could come to an understanding and to an agreement. The agreement was as follows.

All captives were to be set free; freedom to enter and leave all Mizo villages; friendship between Mizo and British; that they would not raid the plains any more and return to their own jurisdiction.

And so, the Right Column, which entered Mizoram to rescue and deliver Zoluti (Mary Winchester), was able to free and deliver 100 captives and had also made a sworn treaty of peace with two great Mizo chiefs Lianlula and Rolura and their descendants, had satisfactorily accomplished their mission which came to an end.

(iii) The Left Column

This was known to the Mizo of that time as the "Entry of the foreigners from the North" or "The Great Sahib". Their commanding officer was Brig. Gen. Bouchier. They entered Mizoram with 1600 soldiers, 2000 coolies and many elephants.

They left Silchar on the 16th of December 1871. They passed through Tipaimuk, Senvawm, Vanbawng, Parvachawm, Chiahpui; and after following the ridge of the Ngopa hill range they continued their way through the villages situated on the Mutelen hillslope side of the Sialkal hill passing through Teikhang, Selawn, Raimang and Tualcheng, they arrived in Chawnchhim-Champhai on 15 February 1872.

Here they met the Mizo chiefs and agreed upon the following: The Mizo were to welcome all those whom the government sent to them. All the guns they had taken when they raided Monierkhal and Nudigram were to be returned; and that the Mizo were to pay Darkhuangs (gongs), Darbus (set of 3 small gongs), Thihnas (Amber necklaces), Thivals (necklaces of semi precious stones), Elephant tusks, mithuns, pigs, goats, chickens and rice. After accomplishing this the Left Column departed from Champhai on the 21st of February 1872, and returned the way they had come. On the 7th of March 1872 they arrived back in Tipaimukh.

On their way back, the Mizo of Khawlian village and the villages on the Mutelen hillsides attacked them armed with guns. The soldiers set fire and burnt the villages of Khawlian, Vanbawng and Teikhang.

Though some villages were burnt and some of the Mizo lost their lives when the British entered Mizoram, in some ways the Left Column was a godsend Bazaars were established at Changsil, Tipaimukh and Sonai. The Mizo were able to obtain salt, cooking utensils, cloth, tools and other things from these bazaars; and the chiefs in the villages near these bazaars owned shares and were able to collect taxes from these bazaars. In fact, during the 1880-1881 First Thingtam Famine, these bazaars served a good purpose and were very useful to the Mizo.

Roads were improved and important roads were constructed. The Tlawng river which was just about usable, was widened and made deeper in some places to facilitate waterway travelling. On

land, the Tipaimukh road had been used by the Left Column. A road was constructed from Silchar to Tipaimukh, Senvawn, Parvachawm, Daido and Pachuia. A bridge was constructed across the Tuivawl river and the road continued as far as Chiapui. It became a well used important road. From the confluence of the Serlui and the Tuirial rivers, the road continued on through Saipum and terminated at Parsenchhip. Besides that another road was made from Bairabi and went through Kolasib and continued along the ridges of the Bualpui range of hills almost parallel to the present Aizawl-Silchar road, it continued via Zanlawn to Serkhan hill.

(b) The Second Entry

After finishing their task, the British expedition 1871-1872 returned to the plains. They had made peace with many of the Mizo chiefs. The chiefs kept their promise and from 1873 to 1887 they desisted raiding the plains for a period which lasted 14 years.

(i) The Reasons for Their Second Entry

The Mizo began to raid the plains again in 1888. Intending to gain more knowledge about Mizoram, a survey team set up a camp at Tlangsam. The team was headed by Lt. Stewart. The rest of the team consisted of only 2 British and 8 Indian soldiers. They left Rangamati on the 16th of January 1888, and reached Saichal on the 1st of the February 1888. At dawn the next day, a Mizo chief of the South, Dokulha and his men attacked the survey team and shot the 2 British soldiers and one Gurkha.

In Manipur, Kamaldar village was raided by the Mizo chiefs Liankunga and Dochhuma in the month of April 1888. They killed 3 persons. Chittagong was also raided by Lakheres in July 1888.

The Kale-Kabaw valley (in Burma) was often raided by the eastern Mizo chiefs Sukte, Zihzang, Tlaisan, Halkha and Thlantlang. They killed 12, led 122 away into captivity and burnt 35 houses. Eastern Mizoram became a part of Burma when Burma

separated from India in 1935 and the Tiau river became the demarcation of its boundary. And every Mizo school boy used to know that the largest lake in Mizoram is the “Rih Lake” which is situated in the northern Chin State.

A Shan village called Indin in the Yaw valley, south of Tahan was raided by the Fanai chiefs. They even kidnapped the Sawbwa of Indin village. The people of Zokhua (Yo Kwa) also raided the Yaw valley. They killed 8 and led 28 into captivity.

The village of Pakuma Rani, situated not far from Tlabung, was raided by the descendants of Vuta: Lungliana and Nikhama. Lianphunga, the chief of Lungtian and his people raided the Tuikuks living in the Chengri valley. They killed 101 and led away 60 captives. Two years later, this was regarded by the first Political Officer Capt. Brown (Hmaireka) as the most serious offence.

The reasons why the chiefs who ruled various hills raided the lands around Mizoram are given and explained by the old people as follows:

- They were protecting the land they owned. There were no boundary marks, but they were daring to claim by what they regarded as their own and they would not allow other people to live or settle on their land.
- At that time the chiefs and warriors were fond of hunting elephants, and the British were making tea plantations on elephant ground; and besides the jungle was being converted into grass land. The chiefs did not like this.
- Among the Mizo chiefs, the Sailors were of the one mind, and made special plans to raid the plains.

On the other hand, the British wished to carry on their trade with tea plantations, and they wanted to do this peacefully. They also wanted to punish the Mizo chiefs for troubling them; so they decided that it would be best to put the Mizo under their rule; so they entered Mizoram second time, more aggressive and more powerful than the first, “The Lushai-Chin Expedition of 1888-1889” using a three pronged movement, and employing three

columns, entered Mizoram from the east, south and north. Let us take a general view of these Columns one at a time.

(ii) The Burma Column

This is known to our forefathers as the “Chhak lam Vailian” (Entry of the Aliens from the east). First the Burma column, under the command of Brig. Faunce, transported itself to Fort White which is situated on the Thantlang mountain side between Tahan and Tiddim. They set up a big camp in the month of December 1888. On the 24th of December, the Sihzang sub-tribe attacked the camp at Fort White intending to chase them back and a non-stop battle ensued. The bravery of the Sihzangs was never forgotten by the British. They counter attacked, but the Sihzangs refused to budge and dug a long deep trench which is still in existence and known as the “Siallung Kulh”. The British burnt their village, but the Sihzangs refused to yield; nor did they give back the captives they had taken. The British also set afire 18 Sakte villages. In the end the Sihzang chief Manglunga surrendered.

The Burma Column could be regarded as two Columns, because a column headed by Col. Skene with a contingent of 1622 soldiers, proceeded to Falam after defeating the Mizos around Fort White, to meet the Southern Column.

The Southern Column led by Brig. Gen. W.R. Symons, with a contingent of 1869 men, started from Kan village and entered the village of Zokhua. From there they continued on the Halkha. They set free 18 captives. After which they were able to go on to Falam. On the 11th of March 1889, they were able to meet and join the forces under Col. Skene.

Gen. Symons summoned all the Falam Chiefs together, commanded them that they must never raid the plains again; that they must pay an annual tax or tribute. Three thousand men folk of Falam gathered in ranks before the British General. They were armed to the teeth and they were hostile! Bravely they refused to pay tribute. They preferred to fight and die for their rights.

The situation was discussed again, and the tax or annual tribute was lessened. At last they came to an agreement. After which, Gen. Symons and the Burma column returned to the plains.

(iii) The Chittagong Column

This is known as the “Chhim Vailian” (Entry of the Alien from the south). It was led by Col. F.V.G. Tregear, and the Political Officer was J. Shakespeare. The contingent consisted of 3380 men. When they reached Lunglei, they separated into two parties. One party under Col. Tregear went eastward. On their way they constructed bridges over the Mat and Kolodyne rivers. Then they made a fort at Darzo and named Fort Tregear. After which they went on and meet the southern column at the Tiau river.

The other party under Col. Skinner followed the ridge of the Buarpui hill range and crossed the river Tlawng at Lungtian. They met and joined forces with the Cachar column in Lianphunga’s village.

(iv) Cachar Column

This column was headed by W.W. Daly. It consisted of 400 military police. They followed the Tlawng river upstream and entered Aizawl from Changsil. They camped on Baza (Bagpipe) hill where the present Parade ground is situated. They were on a fortified Baza hill. That was on the 25 February 1890. The Army still occupies this place.

In March 1890, the expedition completed its task and Captain Browne was appointed Political Officer (Bawrhsap) in the month of April 1890, and he took over the administration of Mizoram. In the second entry of the British into Mizoram, 71 captives held by the Halkha and Sihzang sub-tribes were also set free. The exact number is not known. Hausata’s village, Lungliana’s village Rullam, Zahuata’s village, Nikhama’s village Khawbel, 18 Sukte villages and all the Sihzang villages (the exact number is not known); all the villages mentioned above were burnt and razed to the ground.

Efforts for Protection and Safeguard

From the beginning of their settling in Mizoram, the Mizo lived a free life with no one to rule over them. The chiefs had sovereign power over their subjects. When the British tried to take their lands and rule over them, they did their best to fight back. But because they were not wise enough and due to the better weapons of their enemies, they could not defeat them. Even after the British had appointed an officer to rule over them from Aizawl, some of the chiefs rose to guard their freedom and had to be quelled. The chiefs of Mizoram did their best to protect their lands and their people. In this respect they are praiseworthy. We shall try to explain in a general way, the efforts they made in resisting the British power.

(a) After the British soldiers left Mizoram, the Political Officer Capt. Browne realized that their negotiation and agreement was not successful. So he called the chiefs to Aizawl and told them, "Let us discuss peace and come to terms." The meeting was held in the month of May 1890. The chiefs who were the descendants of Suakpuilala gathered in Aizawl and each chief brought 20 of his subjects with him.

Like the first meeting in which they could not come to terms, the Mizo chiefs and their followers were gathered on the hill where the present Aizawl Fire Brigade is situated and where the old Jail used to be. The Political Officer and his entourage were gathered together in the new fortress above the present parade ground on Baza (Bagpipe) hill.

Like the first meeting, the Mizo chiefs again suggested, "Let the officer come to us alone without any soldiers." At the first meeting the Expedition had refused this suggestion; but on this occasion, the Political Officer agreed to do so. And so, on the 13th of June 1890, the negotiations took place. One thousand brave Mizo youngmen, all with guns, closely lined the path from Baza hill where the Political Officer sat, to where the chiefs were seated. They were all ready on their mark, to take the offensive at once if the occasion arose. That is why upto the present day a

street in Aizawl is still name “Zarkawt” (a street lined with) Mizo warriors.

The Political Officer Capt. Browne, known to the Mizo “Hmaireka” (pinched face), and H.W.G. Cole, an officer known to the Mizo as “Cole sap”, both had an orderly (batman) with him – the four of them approached the Mizo chiefs. An eye witness, a Mizo who was present on this occasion, described it in these words, “When Hmaireka approached us, he seemed oblivious of those around him. With his eyes fixed on the path before him, and neither glancing to the left nor to the right, he came striding and tramping along.”

When he reached the place where the Mizo chiefs were lodged, he took his seat on a brand new quilt-like carpet (pawnpuithar). Although he was in the midst of potential enemies, without the appearance of even an iota of fear or hesitation he declaimed, “From hence forth you shall be under my power, and you shall continue to rule your subjects as usual, but because Lianphunga raided the Tuikuks, I depose him of his chieftainship for 5 years. His son Suaknuna will be chief in his stead. He shall also pay a fine of 30 guns. In future no one under British rule shall commit raids on each other.”

The Mizo chiefs could not disagree with the orders of the Political Officer. To signify that both sides were satisfied with the terms and agreement, a mithun was killed and they held a feast. After the feast, Capt. Browne went striding back the way he had come.

(b) In September 1890 Capt. Browne left Aizawl on his way to Shillong. The chiefs who were the descendants of Manga and Kalkhama and their people joined forces and ambushed Capt. Browne and his enourage on the road to Changsil. First they shot all his followers. Then Saithawma who had been deprived of his rulership exclaimed with finality these challenging words, “Let the chief fight the chief.” So saying he shot the Political Officer who was still mounted on his horse. Seriously wounded Capt. Browne fell off his horse with a thud. With great difficulty he

crawled all the way to Changsil where he eventually died. This events took place on the 9th of September 1890.

On that day the courageous and famous Mizo warrior Khuangchera was not able to participate due to some family difficulties. The next day he and a friend attacked the fort at Changsil. The soldiers shot and killed Khuangchera's companion. According to the Mizo custom the dead body of a friend is never left behind nor forsaken on a battle field. A Pasaltha (Altruistic hunger of warrior) would never do that. So Khuangchera made a brave attempt to carry the body of his friend. Unfortunately the soldiers in the Changsil Fort kept firing at him, and eventually the famous Pasaltha Khuangchera also lost his life.

During the month of September 1890, the Mizo frequently attacked Aizawl and Changsil. They ambushed a group on its way to Shillong at a place called Ropaia bawk (Ropaia's Temporary house); they also took potshots at travellers between Sairang and Changsil. Reinforcements were sent from Silchar to help the Political Officer and those under his control and as they travelled up the Tlawng river, on the 25th of September 1890, the Mizos fired at them incessantly.

The infuriated soldiers set fire the villages of Tanhril, Sentlang and Muthi one after the other and inevitably the most powerful chiefs such as Kalkhama, Sailianpuia, Thanruma and Lalruma surrendered themselves to R.B. McCabe, who had succeeded Capt. Browne.

(c) After overcoming the western part, the Political Officer started demanding the eastern Mizo to supply coolies (porters) and manual labourers to do forced labour. They adamantly and flatly refused to do so. They did not want it in the least. And so, the Political Officer and 100 soldiers were soon on their way to Sesawng, which was Lalburha's village.

All the progeny of L Alvunga, Pawibawia, Liankhama, Buangtheuva, Lalruma, Vanphunga, Pawibawia's mother and their people gathered together at Sesawng. When Bawrhsap (Political Officer) arrived, Lalburha refused to meet or speak to him. This angered the Bara Sahib and a battle ensued.

The British constructed a battlement of stones around themselves from which they shot at their enemies. The Mizo also fired at them from all sides and they battled on and on. But when a large contingent arrived on the scene from Aizawl to rescue Bawrhsap, the Mizos were unable to continue fighting any longer.

When the Assam Chief Commissioner visited Mizoram round about 1920, he must have had the above incident in his mind when he cross-questioned Lalburha. “Why did you shoot at the British, for we are the most powerful?” Lalburha was not to be intimidated or cowed. He answered, “Naturally we shot at you, after all we were at war!” “Nobody can overcome or dare to fight the British.” At that, Lalburha exclaimed, “Its because we cannot overcome you that you are ruling us. We’ve fallen back as far as the Tuivawl river. And if we dared to fight you we’d chase, pursue and rout you as far as London!” The Chief Commissioner realized that Lalburha’s replies to his questions were correct; and it is said that he admired him greatly for this.

After the fighting at Sesawng, the Mizoram Bawrshap toured the north, and in a way it could be said that the Mizos had been subdued in the year 1892.

(d) From the beginning, there was little or no fighting in the south, and because of the resistance movement in the north, Capt. J. Shakespear and Lt. Townsey set out to reinforce the British in the north and help to quell the resistance. On the 16th of March 1892, while they were at Lungrang and Zote, the Mizo attacked them and there was shooting at Leite also. The situation was such that J. Shakespear and his followers had to make a camp and fortify themselves at Chhipphir, with the exception of Vandula (Chief of Ralvawng), all the other chiefs and their forces banded together and surrounded and hemmed in the British troops at Chhipphir. They were able to hold them down for a long time. The British soldiers who came down from Burma arrived just in time to save the situation and to deliver the surrounded soldiers headed by Capt. J. Shakespear and Lt. Townsey.

(e) When a chief of the south Vandula passed away, due to his demise his wife Ropuiliani succeeded him and ruled her people from the village of Ralvawng. With the intention of protecting and defending Mizoram, she and her youngest son Lalthuama resisted the British right on to the end. While they were residing at Ralvawng, the British came and demanded coolies from her. They also asked for chickens and other things. She said, "This freed slave should not say anything to us. His face is loathsome and revolting in my sight. I do wish someone would kill him!" Incidentally, on the next occasion when Satinkhara went again to Ralvawng, Hnawncheuva shot and killed him.

Ropuiliani never paid any of the taxes that the British collected, levied or imposed. "My subjects and I have never paid any tax to anyone, neither have we done any forced labour. We are the owners of this land. We must evict and chase out any and everyone who is an alien." This was her declaration and she lived it till her end.

In August 1893, Capt. Shakespear and his men numbering more than 80 set off to subdue and subjugate the villages of Ropuiliani and Lalthuama. They sent a message demanding 30 guns, 1 gayal, 10 pigs, 10 goats, 20 chickens and 100 maunds of rice; and that they were to bring all this to the Mat river where they would be camped and waiting.

Mother and son assuredly did not want to comply with the demands. Rather than give what they asked for, they preferred war; and they prepared for war immediately. They even invited the chiefs of the north to help them.

When Capt. Shakespear heard about this, in March 1894, before the chiefs of the north made their appearance, he and his men attacked the villages of Lalthuama and Ropuiliani suddenly, swiftly and unexpectedly. The chief and chieftainess were taken captives and all the guns were also taken immediately.

Ropuiliani and Lalthuama were incarcerated in the Chittagong jail. They were treated accordingly and as befitted their rank as chiefs. They even appointed them as peons with monthly

remuneration and emolument. Ropuiliani's life came to an end on the 3rd of January 1895. She was 86 years old when she passed away. Her body was transported to Mizoram; and her son Lalthuama was set free and allowed to accompany his mother's dead body. And so, the courageous Mizos chieftainess Ropuiliani, who had done her utmost to protect and defend her beloved Mizoram like a true patriot, and she who had fought and resisted the British to the end of her life, was laid to rest and buried in Ralvawng, her own village.

In the year 1892 the Bawrshap and his colleagues toured the whole of Mizoram. They met with and spoke to all the chiefs and made peace with them. The terms of agreement and peace rested upon "You must pay taxes" and "You must become coolies." The Mizo chiefs had never been ruled by anyone and had supreme power; they who had always regarded themselves as the celestials "Who strolled between the sun and the moon," were unable to defeat the British. They could not stem those who possessed more wisdom and better weapons. Though they committed themselves to the task of defending and protecting their land; and though they put forth their best efforts, they could not stem the tide. And ultimately they had to surrender to the British.

After the British entered Mizoram, and Britannia ruled Mizoram, her empire was extended and increased by about the size of man's thumb! That's not a very grand achievement, but due to the British administration and what followed later or its repercussions, it could be said that Mizoram and the Mizo people changed completely and became topsy-turvy or at least turned over face down completely.

The Beginning and Development of Christianity

1. The First and Foremost Missionary

The reconnaissance of Mizoram for preaching the Gospel was done by a Welsh Missionary named Rev. William Williams from the Khasi hills. He arrived in Aizawl in the beginning of the

year 1891. At that time Aizawl was being made into a town. There was a large number of different nationalities, and only a few Mizo. Rev. Williams mixed with the Mizo and distributed pictures of Jesus. He tried to find one or two Mizo whom he could take with him to the Khasi hills where they would be able to study the Bible, but he failed to do so.

During that time British officers and their followers who came to sit tight in Mizoram were attacked by the Mizo chiefs and fighting and shooting had not died down as yet. That was why the government did not allow him to stay long; so he left Mizoram on the 11th of April 1891. The first and foremost person to utter the sound of the name of Jesus in the ears of the Mizos was Rev. William Williams.

2. Arthington Mission

The founder of this Mission was Robert Arthington of Hunslet Lane, Leeds, England. He was born in the year 1823. He was a quiet taciturn man of few words, fond of reading and was educated at Cambridge. He was also fond of antiques.

His mother was a well bred, well to do lady who bought all the books her husband wanted. She was also an authoress of stories of newly converted Christians overseas and regarded it as of great importance. She gave most of her money to missions for their ministry. Every year she sent money to support the China Inland Mission and also to Mueller's Orphanage. She raised her children to be of this same mind and was very successful.

From the year 1850, Robert Arthington took deep interest in the work of Missionaries. When he read tales of the work and life of Missionaries, the stories took hold of his heart and mind. They were interesting, thrilling and exciting. When his parents died and his three sisters got married, he was left to live all alone in the house on Hunslet Lane, Leeds, England. He used to feel very lonely. He began to entertain the idea of spreading the Gospel all over the world. This idea filled his mind and became necessary,

imperative and constraining. When his friend, who was also his Lawyer and in charge of all his business and finance, told him that he had a balance of 800,000 Sterling Pounds (8 lakhs), he decided to use this money to spread the Gospel in the world.

A Missionary named John Dalmas, who had returned to England from Bengal, informed Arthington that the Gospel had not reached the hill tribes of Assam. So with the help of J. Dalmas, the “Arthington Aborgins Mission” was established. This is known to the Mizo as the “Arthington Mission.”

Two Missionaries employed by the Arthington Mission namely, J. H. Lorrain (Pu Buanga) and F.W. Savidge (Sap Upa), tried to settle down and work in Tripura State; but the Raja would not permit them to do so and they returned to Chittagong. At that time the Mizo Chiefs were still trying to protect their land and fighting was still in progress between them and the British. Due to this, the government would not allow Missionaries to enter Mizoram, so they shifted to Silchar and stayed with a Welsh Missionary, Miss Laura Evans. They waited one whole year before they obtain a permit to enter Mizoram.

Padding their own canoe upstream, they reached Sairang which is situated on the eastern bank of the river Tlawng. It was on the 11 January 1894. Here they were unable to find partners so they had to carry packs on their backs, and using a tent post, they carried the rest of their belongings on the crook of their arms between them and trudged 15 miles uphill and arrived in Aizawl on the 12th of January 1894.

These two first Zosaps (all foreign missionaries were known in Mizoram as Zosap because they were regarded as part and parcel of the Mizo) served for four years in Aizawl, Mizoram from January 1894 to December 1897. Their main work was the preparation of books. The Mizo had no alphabet and using the Roman letters as its base they invented the present Mizo ‘A Aw B’ in the year 1894. They were able to publish a Mizo Primer with the title “Mizo Zir Tir Bu” in 1896.

Commencing the translation of the Bible in 1895, they started with the Gospel according to Luke which was followed by the translation of the Acts of the Apostles, and the Gospel according to John. In 1898 the Gospel according to Luke was published and printed in book form. In 1899, 18 hymns were also published.

Three Mizos aided them in this work. Pu Suaka (who later became the chief of Durtlang), Pu Thangphunga (who also later became the chief of Chaltlang) and Pu Khamliana (the chief of Lungleng). They were extremely helpful.

The two Zosaps built a house for themselves on MacDonald hill where the present High School field is situated. They used their house as a church. This was the first church in Mizoram. Near this church there was a 'Bawlmual' that is, a place where the ancestors of the Mizo used to offer sacrifices to their God. The two Missionaries were so busy with their work of preparing books for the Mizo that they had no time to travel around and preach the Gospel.

3. The Welsh Mission

The way the Arthington Mission worked was to preach the Gospel wherever it had not been heard yet. So Pu Buanga (Mr. Brown) and Sap Upa (White Elder) received moving orders. The Welsh Mission sent Rev. David E. Jones to replace them in Aizawl. He arrived on 31st August 1897. Fortunately, he was able to live together with Pu Buanga and Sap Upa for four months. Day in and day out, industriously he learnt the Mizo language from them. He was able to memorize 90 words per day! Due to the first two Missionaries, he was immensely enlightened. An then, the Khasi Church also sent Rajbahadur to assist Rev. Jones.

Another Missionaries Rev. Edwin Rowlands arrived in Aizawl on 31 December 1898. He was an accomplished musician and singer. He was very useful in preparing school lessons and text books. The Mizo have Rev. D. E. Jones the appellation

‘Zosaphluia’ (The old white man Mizo); Rev. Edwin Rowlands was also dubbed ‘Zosaphara’ (The new white man Mizo), and they are still referred to by these names in Mizoram. Pu Buanga and his friend and colleague Sap Upa departed from Mizoram, and Zosaphluia and Zosaphara continued the ministry they had started.

4. The Baptist Mission

At first, according to the government, Mizoram was divided into north and south and administrated from Assam and Bengal. In the same way south Mizoram became a Mission field for the Baptist Mission. Pu Buanga and Sap Upa, who had once before laboured for four years in Aizawl, set out on their way to Lunglei. When they reached Tlabung, the Christians of Sethlun village came to meet and welcome them. The welcoming party were so glad and overcome with happiness that some of them shed tears of joy. On the 31st of March 1903, they entered Lunglei. The first occasion of their religious service in the Sethlun church building was memorable. The women folk actually spread sheets on the path leading to the church. The Missionaries settled down in Serkawn and it became the permanent headquarters of Baptist Church in Mizoram.

5. The Maraland Baptist Church

Rev. R. L. Lorrain, the younger brother of Pu Buanga, entered Serkawr in the year 1907, to start a ministry; and Serkawr became the headquarters of the maraland Baptist Church. In 1910 the first convert to be baptized was Thetua. In 1912 they printed and published a Hymn book containing 68 hymns, and the church of Maraland became firmly rooted and established.

6. The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army began its ministry in Mizoram in the year 1916. Its Mizos founder was Pu Kawlkhuma. His most prominent work was the establishment of an Orphanage in Aizawl. It was precious and invaluable to other denominations.

It was in this way that the first churches in Mizoram had their beginnings. Later on many and various denominations and churches sprung up in Mizoram.

7. The Effect of Christianity in Mizo Society

When Christianity, which was unknown to our fore fathers, came to Mizoram in 1894, its effects and repercussions on the Mizo people were remarkable and stupendously great. Let us take two different views, the reverse and the observe.

(a) Bad and Misleading Influence

There is so much bad in the best, and so much good in the worst. When Christianity, which is regarded as infallible, came to Mizoram, it brought with it bad and misleading influences which were not the teachings of true Christianity. Let us take a look at some of them, so that we will be able to reform ourselves and be more careful, cautious and circumspect in the future.

- (i) The Mizo carried and practiced their admiration and respect for the white men to the extreme. They went so far as to regard whatever the Europeans did as good and proper. This led them to despise and condemn other nations. It also led to discrimination and prejudice which was neither right nor humane.
- (ii) It would be said that they turned their backs on their national dress. They also used to grid a cloth and fasten it round the waist; they also used to weave and wear beautiful coloured cloth with delicate designs; they who were a tribe that wore earrings – it makes us wonder whether they despised all these things. Instead of making them more sanitary; instead of improving them, instead of making them more beautiful – they simply rejected their tribal dress. That almost left the Mizo without a national costume. But now, it affords us great pleasure to see that they are waking up from their slumbering mood.
- (iii) The Mizo used to dance in groups or individually. They used to dance to the sound of drum. The first Christians rejected

those things. They even went so far as to despise and disparage their national feasts such as the ‘Chapchar Kut’. They almost regarded these things as the instruments and wiles of Satan. However, during the third Christian revival in the year 1919, the people were filled with joy. The spirit of dancing came upon them. They were constrained to dance, and they could not help but dance. To accompany the singing of hymns the drum was introduced into the Church and was used as an instrument of praise and adoration. As was done in the ancient life and ways of the Mizo, the service leader of someone in the congregation cued the singers by chanting the words of the hymn line by line, so there was no need to look at the words in the hymn book. That was one of the first items they revived from among the things they had lost of their culture.

- (iv) Mizo have their own daily expressions and poetical words. The Missionaries were unaware of this and they used the common words of the Mizo language when they translated the hymns. The first Mizo church elders thought that was the proper way of doing it. And so, the picturesque Mizo expressions and the exquisite poetical words which used to touch and permeate their hearts and minds, were all rejected and regarded as wordly, irreligious and not to be used by Christians.

The early Mizo church leaders and elders were more to be blamed than the Missionaries. Regarding the rejection and ban on the use of these beautiful poetical works and graphic expressions – the Mizo have been exceedingly slow in realizing that they had been misled. But now we can say that they have taken great strides and have come a long way in understanding and correcting his glaring discrepancy.

It would be far from wrong if we said that the Mizo borrowed the clothes and ways of the Europeans when they received, preached and sang the Word of God. If they had received it with their own Mizo imaginations, minds and thoughts, and if it had been preached and taught in a way that was

compatible and consistent with their culture, customs and way of life, it would have been more profitable, beneficial and fruitful.

(b) The Good Influences

Having seen the reverse side, let us take a look at the obverse side. The good effects of Christianity on the Mizo are many, and we will not be able to mention all of them, so let us expose to view some of the more prominent ones.

- (i) In bygone days, when the Mizo met together, it was habitual for them to serve and drink 'Zu' (their tribal intoxicating beverage). In the drinking places, in the 'Zawlbuk' (where all the bachelors had to sleep), and when they courted the young ladies, treating each other was their way of entertaining visitors and guests. It was their way of being sociable. When they became Christians, they began to hold meetings in a Church elder's house or some other convenient house, where they had fellowship with one another; sang hymns together; discussed inspiring topics, and encourage one another. It was all helpful, and useful for enlightenment.
- (ii) On social occasion of weeping or joy; or when chiefs met together, or when entertaining prominent and important guests; Zu was used constantly more than any other thing. Drinking Zu was a must and was customary. After they became Christians and all this was rejected and changed completely. Nowadays those who drink Zu are despised, condemned and looked down upon. A person may be rich or he may hold a high position, but if he drank or even as much as sipped alcohol, he is neither admired nor esteemed. Regarding their idea and opinion of Zu, the Mizo have altered and changed completely. This brought about their development, growth, progress and maturity.
- (iii) In the past, strangers who entered a village were flippantly shouted at and challenged to wrestle. There was a great gap between the well to do and the poor; the Thangchhuah (titled families) and the common people. After they embraced

Christianity they looked upon one another in a brotherly way, and now there is not much discrimination between the great and the small. This has brought unity and equality among the people.

- (iv) In the olden days, wedding celebrations were shabby and sometimes indecent. When they gathered at the house of the bereaved, Zu was served and sometimes it became more of a drunken rivalry than the consolation of the bereaved family. After they became Christians, all these things changed. Everything is done in an orderly manner; and religious services are held in the house of the bereaved. The celebrations, the behaviour and the way of doing things have changed for the better.
- (v) It is a terrible experience to be accused of being possessed of a malignant spirit. Those who were accused were even killed for it. The Mizo used to be afraid of those who were regarded as wizard and witches.

The British government made laws which prohibited all these things. But it was Gospel which uprooted it out of their minds. And so, it was Christianity that got rid of these foolish and troublesome notions and beliefs.

- (vi) Though at first the Mizo were a simple tribe with no written language; due to the Gospel, they now possess their own alphabet and literature. This widened their view of the world, and in no time there were many educated Mizo. In the 1991 census, Mizoram stood second in the whole India, having 81.23% literate people in their State. The written language has been a tremendous help in the growth, development and progress of the Mizos people.
- (vii) Regarding sanitation and health, they have made great progress. Before, they used to move from place to place like nomads, but now, they have settled down permanently. They own good lands and property; hereditable gardens, plantation

plots and business of which they have acquired and instinct and acumen. All this has brought them affluence and prosperity, and has led them into a firm and stable life.

- (viii) Whereas before they used to be negligent and careless, and despised orphans; and instead of having pity on them, they used to scold them. But now they look at them and do their best to cater to their needs. So, love for their fellowmen has been enhanced.
- (ix) In the past, they were always fighting with other sub-tribes living in the vicinity. Sometimes they used to raid each other and they were always living in fear of their enemies. The government put a stop to all these hostilities; but it was Christianity which made them realize in their hearts that it was wrong. And now they are preaching the Gospel among their former enemies.
- (x) In the past, Tlawmngaihna (self-denial) was a way of life to the Mizo. It was great and worth honouring, but it was practiced to the extreme, and they never differentiated, discerned, distinguished or shifted the time and place. So it could be said that the altruism of Mizo was muddy.

But after they became Christians, they viewed all things with a clear mind. They learnt to use this self-denial in the right places, the right time and in the right way. Without groping in the dark, with a clearer vision, and better prospective they began to see things as they ought to be. And so Tlawmngaihna, which was admired by the Mizo, became clear and limpid due to Christianity.

Part 1

CULTURE

1. MIZO VILLAGE

Upto the year 1890, our forefathers did not stay at a particular place for more than 3 or 4 years. They always shifted from one place to another in search of better environment, habitation, vegetation and a good source of water or may be because they were always at war with another or may be due to some superstitious beliefs, but it is very seldom that we come across instances of a chief shifting his village from one place to another in search of shelter from their enemies.

The decision to shift a village is planned well in advance. The village chief selects two or three village elders who along with some youths of the village go out to survey a certain area fit for a living, if it has a good source of water supply. Sometimes, the surveyors take with them a cock to see if it crows at night and to be completely certain that the area they have chosen fits in every respect. At times a simple method of inquiry is applied to find out if the place or area they have surveyed is suitable for the construction of a new village. Thus, one can say that before deciding upon a new village, every detail is very carefully looked into.

Once a selection is made the planning of the village is the next step, certain plots or areas of land is again specified for building of houses. The first and the most important task is selection of the best plot in the centre of the residential area where the house of the chief shall be built. The chief's house is built in the centre of the village with a large compound, it should stand out significantly to symbolise the village.

The next step is to look for a site where the "Zawlbuk" or the bachelor's dormitory shall be constructed. This house should be constructed on a small hillock not far from the chief's house. Thirdly, they decide as to where the elders shall build their houses.

They are each given plots around the chief's compounds and the house of the chief elder should be just below the house of the chief. Thus, one can notice that the chief and the village elders occupy the best sites in a village. The next in line to choose their sites are the surveyors and it is only after them that the ordinary villagers select portions to build their houses.

After deciding but before shifting to a new site, villagers can start cultivation of crops in a new area in advance which may be nearer to the proposed new village site. After clearing the jungles, the villagers start collecting materials whatever necessary to start a new village and it is only after they are completely ready that the chief and his entire village shifts to a new site.

A typical Mizo village is usually located on a hill with a good view of the surroundings and also have the advantage of being on the alert to check on the activities of their enemies. A Mizo village always has a wall constructed around it and on the top of the wall are placed sharp pointed bamboos known as 'Dai sakuh' to prevent the enemies from climbing over the wall and at the entrance to the village is a duty post where the village youths take turns to be on guard against any intruders. Again, inside the village is built another wall around the chief's house to shelter the old, the weak, the children and the properties in case of any attack.

2. MIZO FAMILY LIFE

The Mizo follow the patriarchal form of society, the line of family tree is reckoned from the side of the father. Although there are some clan or sub-clan among the Mizo tribe where the eldest son inherits his father's property, the usual form in the Mizo society is, the youngest son who is the heir to his father's property.

A Mizo family comprises of the father and the mother and several children. Sometimes we may also find the sister of the father living with them or at times a relative may also be living with them.

In the early days it was a custom that when the family gathered together there should be no laughter or any merry-making. The language or mode of talking to one another is always harsh. When the mother and the father talks to each other it appears as though they are on bad terms – never a gentle word is exchanged between them and this is not because they were illiterate or uncivilised but mainly because it was customary in those days. The reason behind this is because the Mizo of early days believed in some superstitions being known as 'Khuavang' or the guardian spirit – who the Mizo say became jealous if kind, soft and affectionate conversations are exchanged between husbands and wives, and death occurs to either of the two which again is believed to be a revenge taken by the spirit and this appears quite reasonable on the part of the people to abide by such manners if one does not want to lose his or her partner forever.

When a child is born in the family if it is a male child there is much jubilation celebrating his birth and so indicate that they want the child to be brave and become a great

warrior. To fulfill this desire, as soon as the umbilical cord is cut the new born child, with help from the elders, lights a bamboo torch and the elders shower their blessings on him. On the other hand if the new born is a female child, they wish her to be a beautiful woman so that at the time of her marriage she could fetch a good amount for her price; also on the birth of a female child, parched rice and rice beer is distributed to visitors. A number of ceremonies are performed after the birth of a child.

While naming a child there is no restriction in the case of a child born in the family of the chief. An infant can bear any name which the parents may wish for him/her. But in the case of the general community naming their child is a difficult task because they have to be careful not to offend their chief with their selection of certain names which the chief may not favour. One significant feature in Mizo names which distinguishes a male from a female is that the names of females usually end with the alphabet 'i' and 'a' for that of a male though again there are certain clans and sub-clans who do not follow this pattern. Another feature of Mizo names is that one cannot notice to which sub-tribe one belongs to just by looking at one's name because there is no mention of it and it was found that only the Paite and Thado (or Kuki) names denoted to which sub-tribe they belong to.

After the advent of Christianity one remarkable change in the Mizo society was the style of composing names from that of naming a child after great warriors or after some great deeds they accomplished to names composed on the line of Christianity or Christian values and it may not be wrong to say that the new generation of Mizo, especially the 'Sailo' and the 'Chawngthu' sub-clans started including the names of the clan to which they belong to at the end of their names.

Let us now study the stand of a young girl in a Mizo family. From an early age a girl engages herself in activities which she will have to undertake when she grows older. They

play a certain game in which they play at being grown up people – they carry dolls on their back, or they pretend to collect and carry fire woods or carry water. As they grow a little older, they start learning to sift or winnow rice in a bamboo tray but at this age they use dust, or sand instead of rice. In short we can say that a girl learns everything necessary for her to know at an early age in the game in which she pretends to be a grown up, and she is very helpful in the house helping her mother in her daily activities. It is because of all these that it is often said, ‘to have a girl as a first born is always better.’

The young male child on the other hand is not very helpful in the household work as a girl child is to her mother but, a small boy helps in looking after the cattle and this becomes his sole responsibility when he attains the age of 8 or 9 years, but after they have crossed that age he is no longer helpful. Sometimes he goes out to the jungle and brings home certain vegetables and at the age of puberty, he starts collecting twigs, sticks, small branches for fuel. It becomes the duty for the boys (before attaining manhood) to collect wood for the ‘Zawlbuk’ fire. These boys make a well disciplined group of their own. They spend their time in the Zawlbuk where they learn the art of wrestling. At the age of 10 years or so the young boys accompany their elders to the jhoom and their main task is to carry water from the stream and distribute to their elders, prepare their lunch and by the time they are 15 years of age, the boys are expected to have been taught all that they should know from their elders.

It is interesting to note the mode or manner of living of a young girl in a Mizo family. So, let us try to point out some interesting features. They wake up with the break of dawn, collect water and on their return they clean rice and after they have done this, they serve food and they are compelled to sit till the last person has finished eating because she is incharge of the rice pot. They wash up all that needs to be washed and clean the place and after they have put everything

in order, they go to the jhoom. Sometimes when they do not go to the jhoom the girls go out to fetch fire wood and on their return they sit down to weave. Thus, we can notice that from the few activities mentioned above the young girl hardly finds any leisure time. She is always engrossed in some household work, but inspite of this, if she is asked what she has been doing, the reply that one gets from her is, "I've not done anything worthy today."

When evening comes, it is the duty of the young girl to cook dinner and in between she spins cotton, winds it into a skein and again winds it into a ball. Knowing that their parents like 'Tuibur' (nicotine water from a women's pipe which is used as luxury) we notice the young girls smoking the pipe all the time.

It is also the duty of the young girl to be able to provide a new 'Puan' (hand-woven cloth) for her brother and a girl who is capable of doing this is highly admired. It is also their duty to see to other clothings of the family, see that the dirty clothes are washed and well maintained. Thus, the young girl is the one who does the work in the house in a Mizo family.

The young boys on the other hand are useless to the family, because they very seldom render any help. They go out to the jhoom to work and if they don't they just roam about. But, the young boy is always favoured and given top priority by other members of the family.

The status of the mother in a family may be difficult to explain. In a word we may say that she is incharge of the house, and thus she occupies the most important position in the family, because it is she who looks after the children, manages food and clothing for the family and arranges earthen pots etc. She looks after the domestic animals such as pigs and the chickens. The father however, is the head of the family and it is he who makes all the decisions. He looks after all the work other than the house hold and it is his duty to see that everything is in order.

In the early Mizo society, there was a clear-cut boundary as regards the duties to be performed by men and by women. The women knows very well what duties they are assigned to and vice versa – one will not interfere with the duties of the opposite sex. They perform their activities well and even a family who happens to be very poor will not go begging but will instead try to support oneself seeking the help from others which appeared to be very respectful, and it was considered very disgraceful to go begging.

3. THE CHIEF AND HIS SUBJECTS

The various tribes of the descendants of Mizo had their leader or chief since long ago; but for the present account we will not be able to trace all of them. We will only dwell upon the largest group among the Mizo, that is, the Sailo chiefs and their subjects. Each Sailo chief ruled many villages. Though the daily life of the non-Sailo tribes had slight differences, in essence they followed the rules outlined by the Sailo chiefs.

It seems that our Mizo ancestors began to have chiefs between the years 1450 to 1700 A.D., when they were dwelling between the Lentlang mountain range and the river Tiau. According to our legends the first chief we are certain about was Zahmuaka, who may have ruled his subjects between the year 1580-1600 A.D. Gradually the Mizo moved westward, and in 1700 A.D. most of them had crossed the river Tiau. Here in Mizoram they were able to live freely and exercise their liberty from the period of Zahmuaka (1580) to the time when the British annexed Mizoram and started ruling the Mizo in 1890 A.D. Before that, they had enjoyed independence for 300 years. We can add another 60 years to this period of freedom because the chiefs continued to rule their subjects under the Superintendents appointed by the governments from 1890 to 1954. We will now take a general view of the chiefs and their subjects during these 360 years.

The first clear knowledge of the way in which the Mizo chiefs ruled their subjects is derived from the period 1740 to 1750 in which seven Sailo chiefs under the leadership of Pu Kawlha established the village of 'Selesih 7000', where the present Khawbung (S) and Zawlsei are situated. This sizeable village of 7000 houses had many advantages and was important in various ways.

The aura of Selesih was such that it perturbed their enemies and other villages and clans in Mizoram, especially those on east bank of Tiau river. Their enemies on east of the river Tiau dared not raid nor attack them, and other tribes and even some descendants of the Mizo who were already settled, moved out of Mizoram and made it convenient for them under their Sailo chiefs to establish Mizoram – the land of the Mizo.

The customs, culture and way of life led by the Mizo today had its origin in Selesih and was outlined under the guidance of Pu Kawlha and the other six chiefs. From that time onwards the chiefs learned how to look after and rule over their subjects. Gradually the Mizo way of life improved, progressed and became a well ordered life which developed, unfolded and became manifested as a life that was suitable, and consistent with Mizoram and its inhabitants. The Mizo way of living and its community with its hard, sound, healthy core came into being. Mizo culture and tradition was born and reached its pinnacle.



Mizo chief in his traditional attire



Mizo chief's house is wide and have considerable length. It the biggest house in the village. It mainly comprises of five sections - 'sumhmun', i.e. front verandah, 'vanlung', i.e. slave's quarters, 'dawvan', i.e. a dias for consultation with village-elders, living room for his family and 'bahzar' i.e. sitting as well as activity room.

Generally, in a Mizos village, the chief's house was situated at its heart, in the centre of the village. There was a wide space in front of the house. It was the village square and was known as the 'Lal mual'. There was also a large dormitory for all the youngmen in the village. Before the Mizos crossed the Tiau river, the chief's subjects did not build his house for him, and if they did, nothing is mentioned regarding this. But after they crossed the river Tiau, the descendants of Lallula who settled in northern Mizoram, used to build their chief's house like this:

Starting from the front, there was a 'Sumhmun' or front verandah where a wooden mortar was fixed for husking rice. The next part was called a 'Vanlung'. Here the slaves of the chiefs had their quarters. Its size depended on the number of slave families and it was partitioned into two or three rooms. From the slave quarters you entered the third part called the 'Dawvan.' It was a spacious floor or dias. Here there was a fire-place; and it was here that the chief and his village elders discussed important matters, held court and settled disputes and

complaints. The fourth part was the living room for the chief and his family, and the fifth and last part was a raised enclosed back verandah called a 'Bahzar.' Here they would sit and chat during the day and it was also used by the maidens for weaving the cloth.

From the description it can be understood that the chief's house was wide and had a considerable length. So it could be expected, right, proper and plausible that the community should build the chief's house. One person from each house or family in the whole village was bound to help in building the chief's house. When Vuta was living in Hualtu village, it is said that his house was 600 feet long! And when Lallula dwelt in Darlung village, the size of his house must have been quite impressive, because a song was composed about it :

*See Darlung, the village where we live,
The chief's house in the centre expansive,
Daily din of gongs oppressive.*

However, in southern Mizoram, upto the time the British entered, the descendants of Rolura who were chiefs never had their homes built by their subjects. They used to request their relations and friends to help them in the construction of their house.

The chief was all in all to his subjects be it regarding the declaration of war; in burying the hatchet and making peace with another tribe and in the sacrificial ceremony which ratified the peace treaty; in dividing lots for annual cultivation (jhoom) plots; even in religious ceremonies and also at the times of celebrating public feasts or festivals. He was the supreme head. He had power over the life and death of his subjects. He could pardon a wrong-doer, or give the verdict for punishment or the death sentence.

In his administration the chief had some important people who assisted him. The most important among them were the chief's elders (Lal upate). The chief chose his elders and in most cases he appointed those who were closely related to him. There

was no fixed number, so he appointed as many as he wanted. No one was allowed to criticize him; and in fact, nobody ever did. Those elders served the chief faithfully. Their knowledge, wisdom and all their time and possession were at the disposal of the chief. That was why they were known as the 'chief ministers or elders' or 'ministerial elders.' Every day they spent most of their time in the chief's house and drank 'Zu' (rice beer) with him. Their home were situated not far from the chief's house, on the periphery of the village square. So they were called 'aristocratic elders' and also 'Mual eng hmu pha' which means 'He who is able to see the light of the village square.'

The brothers of the chief, who had no village to rule, and the close and distant relations of the chief were known as the 'free.' They were unrestrained and unrestricted. They were the Libertines. They were exempted from paying 'Fathang' which was the annual tax or tribute of paddy paid by all the families to the chief. The Mizo used the system of shifting cultivation. The Libertines were always the first to choose plots for the annual jhooms.

Before the people chose plots, the 'Ramhuals' that is, the principal men of the village, chose their lots. The chief appointed the 'Ramhuals.' He chose the large families that were able to produce big crops of cereals and vegetables. However, after the harvest, they paid a much bigger amount of paddy-tribute (Fathang) than the common people. In some villages, the principal or prominent men (Ramhuals) automatically became the chief's elders.

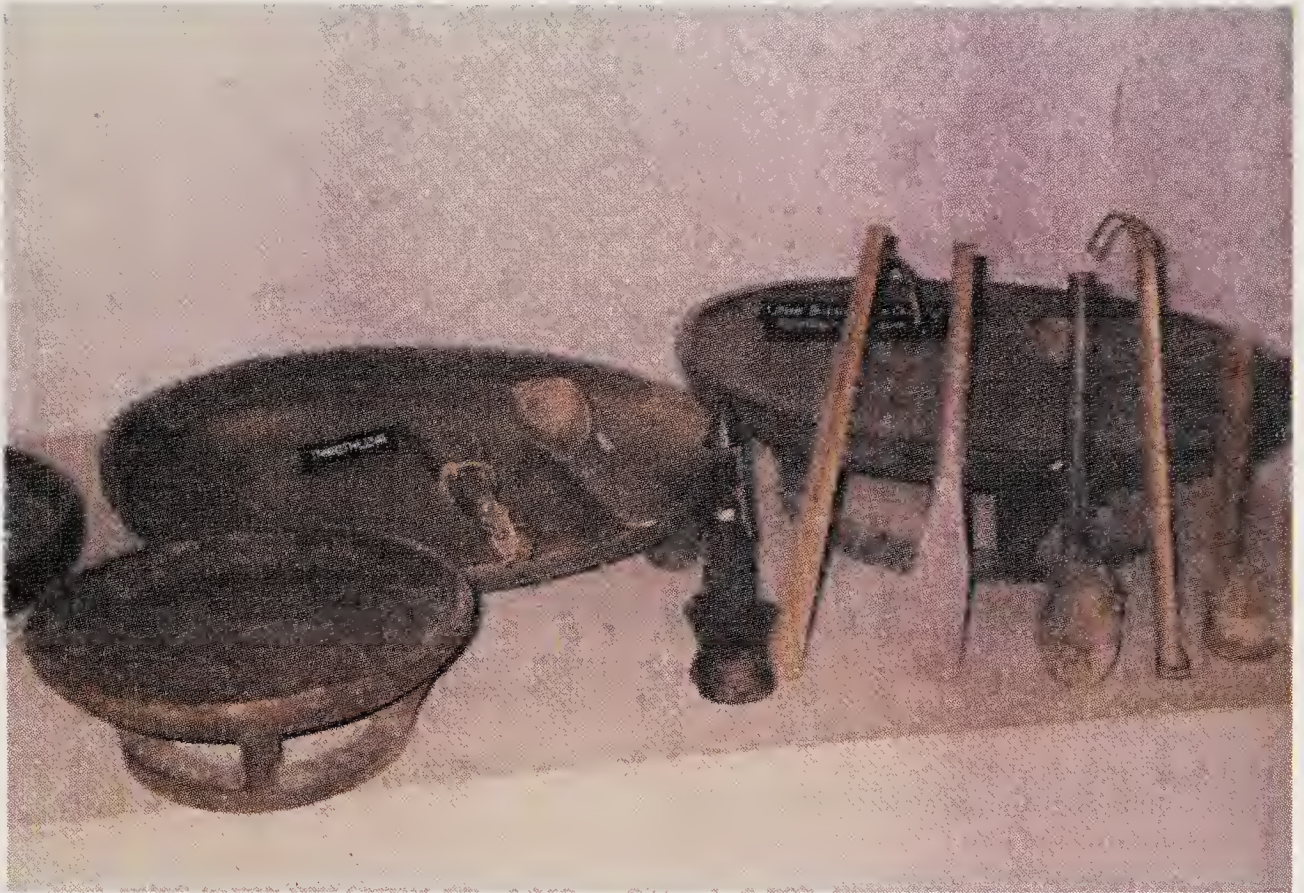
The blacksmith (Thirdeng) was regarded as very important to the community. His designation, work and every blacksmith's paraphernalia was handed down from father to son since the days of our ancestors. The work could only be done by skillful craftsmen, and was beyond the abilities of ordinary people. The blacksmith was selected and appointed by the chief. There was an understanding and relationship between them; so he was known as the 'Chief's blacksmith.' Generally there was at least one blacksmith in a village, but some large villages may have had

more than one. The blacksmith also took part in the administration of the village with the chief and the elders.

Though the work of the village crier (Tlangau i.e. announcer) was below the dignity of most people, society and the community could not do without him. They would have been lost without him. Important matters which the chief wanted his people to know about were proclaimed by the village crier. Matters which were discussed by the youngmen in the Zawlbuk, and which was expedient for the public to know about were made known through the village crier. He frequented the chief's house so that he would be on hand and available when the chief needed him. He was always at the beck and call of the chief. Because his main work was that of a menial, people looked down on him and some would even shout at him flippantly while he was about his business in the street. People went so far as to say that, "If you beat a village crier it is not a crime and you would not be fined for it."

The "Sadawt" (Priest) was the leader, the principal man who took the lead in all things pertaining to religion. He was like our present Pastor or Minister. The various Mizo tribes or clans had their own priests, and on religious occasions they called their "Sadawt" to perform the religious ceremonies. The Sadawt was regarded as a magician or one who practices withcraft. Clans of the same confederation shared the same priest. They called this 'eating the bewitched flesh together.' The chief had his own special "Sadawt" and among the "Sadawts" in the village he was the greatest, the high priest, the chief's magician. In all the religious ceremonies which included and embraced the whole village, the chief's Sadawt performed the ceremonies.

To cure sickness and disease the people called and employed the "bawlpu", the medicine man of the village. He was a sort of doctor. After examining the patient, the bawlpu usually prescribed the sacrifice of a certain animal. If the patient or his family did not own such an animal, they had to buy it; and if they did not have the money, they were bound to borrow the money without fail.



Mizoram is thickly wooded state. It has very wide range of trees. Living amidst natural resources Mizos have used wood for their utensils of daily use.



Mizo craftsman made different kinds of baskets for various purposes. 'Thul', 'tlamen', 'daw-rawn' etc. are used in farming, harvesting and transportation of paddy.



Cheraw is the most colourful dance among all the dances. The dancers move by stepping alternately in and out from between and across a pair of horizontal bamboos, held against the ground by people sitting face to face. Imitations of movements of birds, swaying of trees etc. are patterns and steps of the dance. It is performed with great care, precision and elegance.





Bamboo looks like a big, tall tree but it is not. In fact, it belongs to the grass family just as paddy and millet. Its trunk is hollow made up of cylindrical tubes. It is the tallest among the whole grass family. It can be easily cut into strips, so many things can be prepared from it. Mizos have transformed their handicrafts into work of art from mere functional pieces.



Traditional beer-pots were required whenever there was a ceremony or festival. Most of the time, men used to carry **zu** from his own house to the Chief's house. Thus beer-pots were very handy.

The medicine man (Bawlpu) used incantations. The formulae of these spells and invocations were known only to him. They were valued very much by him, and was his secret for curing diseases. Only when he became old and almost decrepit and only then, that he trained someone from among his family or near relations to carry on his work. Sometimes the various clans of the Mizo shared a medicine man, so in some large village there were two or even three Bawlpus.

Sometimes, both the “Sadawt” and the “Bawlpu” were mentioned as or called “Puithiam” meaning “Priest.” But we should understand and always remember that their duties were separate and not the same.

Generally, in a Mizo village, there were two kinds of people: the “Royal” and the “Common”. All those who were not of the chief’s family or his relations were included in the appellant “Common people” (Hnamchawm). Among the common folks, there were two kinds of people – the rich and the poor; and they were differentiated as “mitha” and “mirethei”, meaning the “wealthy or well to do” and the “poor”.

We must neither forget nor omit the “Val upa.” In the Mizo society and community the Val upa played an important role. They were outstanding and prominent. They had wide powers, to a certain extent; they were respected and their amination was great. They controlled the children and the youngmen. Strange to say, they were not appointed by the chief, neither were they elected by the people. Val upa were middle aged men who gave their lives completely in serving the community. They automatically reached their status by being the most courteous, chivalrous, altruistic and industrious; so much so that no one could outdo, outshine or outstrip them in these qualities or traits which added up to their outstanding personalities. They were middle aged bachelors and some had spouses.

They were not included in the chief’s administrative council or court; but there were many and various things in the village which needed to be settled outside the chief’s court. These things

were pertinent to the whole village; and all the youngmen of the village met together in the bachelors dormitory, the Zawlbuk, to debate, discuss and thrash out these matters. Decisions and resolutions were never made until the Val upa had taken the floor and spoken and given his opinions and advice. The Val upa acted as their spokesman and did his best to carry out those resolutions and decisions by taking it to the chief's court or the chief's ears. Finally, the village crier proclaimed these important matters that had been decided in the Zawlbuk to the people at large.

The above is a brief account of the important characters who assisted the chief in the daily life of the Mizo in the past.

The chief, his big house and village square situated in the centre of the village; his elders, his family and relations; the prominent citizens, the blacksmith and the village crier, the priest and medicine men; the well to do and the poor, the Val upa and last but not the least the Zawlbuk where all the youngmen and bachelors slept: these were the essence and ingredients that made the culture and traditions of the Mizo. They were the essential parts that made the life of the community run smoothly, making village life lovely and charming.

Now let us take a look at the tributes and taxes paid by the people to their chief.

Among the taxes paid to the chief, the "Fathang" was the most important. It was the annual tribute of paddy which was given to the chief after the harvest. According to our elders it originated in this way. When our ancestors were living between Lentlang and the Tiau, a clan in the villages of Khawrua and Tlangkhua were bereft of their chief. Seipui was a sizable village from which many Mizo branched out to start villages of their own; so the representatives of Khawrua and Tlangkhua, who were at a loss regarding a new chief, went to Seipui to ask the advice of its chief and elders. They were advised to invite Zahmuaka to be their new chief.

Zahmuaka was living in Seipui and had a large family. He declined their offer and was reluctant to take on the responsibilities

of a chief of two villages. But his wife Lawileri exclaimed, "Since they have invited such as us to be their chief, we should and ought to go!" So Zahmuaka and his whole family accepted the invitation, and he became the chief of Khawrua and Tlangkhua. Zahmuaka was not happy with the heavy responsibilities of his chieftainship and decided to return to his old village, but all his subjects deterred him. They made a promise saying, "Each house in our two villages will pay you an annual tribute of paddy." So Zahmuaka was coaxed, cajoled, wheedled and at last induced to stay on as their chief. It was about from 1560 to 1600 A.D. It is said that this was the origin of the "Fathang," the tribute of paddy paid annually to the chiefs.

As time went on, the "Fathang" became a fixed custom, but upto the time of the British administration of Mizoram, the amount of paddy poured into the chief's paddy storage was not the same in the various villages. But when N.E. Parry (1924-1928) became Bawrhsap (Bara Sahib-Superintendent) of Mizoram, he stipulated a fixed amount of six kerosene tins (two loads) of paddy for the Fathang.

The chief's elders were given first choice when they chose cultivation plots, but they had to pay the Fathang tribute. When there were needy, almost starving families in the village, the chief collected paddy from the elders' houses to provide for these needy families; and the elders used to give without stint. In that way the chief and the elders ruled and supported each other in an all for one and one for all system which was for the benefit of the people.

The 'Ramhual' of prominent people of the village also got the first choice of lots for jhooms. They gave the chief a bigger amount of Fathang tribute than ordinary folks. The chief depended on them a lot for his subsistence.

The 'Sachhiah' tax was another important tribute paid to the chief. When anybody shot and killed an animal in a hunt or caught it by using a trap in the area ruled by the chief, he had to wrench off the left foreleg and give it to the chief as tax or tribute. The 'Sachhiah' was not optional. It was compulsory and included,

embraced and applied to the barking deer and all animals larger than the barking deer. The porcupine was excluded; and if a person was lucky enough and came upon or found a dead animal or carcass which no one claimed, he was not liable but exempted from paying 'Sachhiah' to the chief. The unclaimed dead animal was called 'satlaw' in Mizo language.

The 'Fathang' and the 'Sachhiah' were the two main tributes paid to the chiefs by his subjects. There were other lesser taxes as follows:

The 'Khuai chhiah' (honey tax):

When large beehives were found on a cliff in the jurisdiction of any chief, the person who found and took it was liable and obliged to give half the honey to the chief. If there were four persons involved in the find, they divided the honey into five shares – one share was for the chief.

The Mizo caught fish using various kinds of herbal toxins. They beat the herbs, creepers, barks of certain trees, fruits, roots or tubers on a rock in midstream till these turned pulpy. The pulp was then soaked and rinsed in the stream and due to the toxin the fish was stupefied. In this way they were able to catch quite a large amount of fish. This is called "Sangha vuak." When one male member from each house in the whole village gathered together and went in a group to a stream to catch fish using herbal poisons it was called 'Sangha tlangvuak.' In some villages when they divided the catch, one extra share was set aside to be given to the chief as a tax or tribute.

Another tax was called "Sekawt hawn man" (appending the gate for a mithun). In the days of our ancestors, wealth was measured in terms of number of mithuns a person possessed. If a person sold a mithun to someone in another village, it would be loss to the people of the village, and they would not be able to taste its meat. So, as if to pay for the grass and leaves consumed by the mithun, the buyer had to pay an extra two rupees as a tax, which was given to the

chief. The tax was known as “Sekawt hawn man” (opening the exit for the mithun).

“Building the chief’s house” was also regarded as a tax or ‘a tax of one day’s labour.’ This did not apply to Rolura’s descendants in south Mizoram, but the descendants of Lallula in the north had to pay this tax; and one person from each family or house had to help build the chief’s house.

The ‘Khuai chhiah’ or honey tax; the extra share of fish whenever the whole community went fishing using herbal toxins (Sangha tlangvuak); and one day’s labour for building the chiefs house were all regarded as lesser taxes or tributes; and there is no mention or record of anyone being fined for negligence as far as these taxes were concerned.

Every year after harvest, all those who had used the services of the blacksmith, gave him one and a half kerosene tins of paddy to pay for his services because he had no time to make a jhoom. And when anyone in the village was successful in hunting, or if he caught an animal in a trap, he was obliged to give half the backbone of the animal, split lengthwise and including three ribs, to the blacksmith. This lesser tax given on such an occasion was known as “Thirdeng sa” (Blacksmith’s meat).

In some villages, instead of this, the flesh or meat stripped off the backbone was given to the blacksmith. The length was stipulated as one ‘Nguntang’ for the blacksmith’s portion. “Nguntang” is a measurement which is the distance from the tip of the middle finger to halfway between the wrist and the elbow.

Every year each house or family paid the village crier one basket (Kho or fawng) of paddy. The size of the Kho or Fawng (basket), depended on the size of the village.

At first, the aforesaid tributes and taxes were unheard of among the Mizo, but as we have explained regarding the origin of the “Fathang,” necessity is the mother of invention; and due to necessity, all the other tributes and lesser taxes or fees came into being. No matter what their origin was, they came into being

with the agreement, acquiesce and assent of the people. In studying and viewing the whole world in general, the taxes paid by the Mizo to their chiefs comparatively were not very high. They were more buoyant than the many taxes that were levied and imposed by other rulers of other countries. So it could be said that the Mizo chiefs did not impose any heavy burden on their subjects.

Let us take a look at crime in Mizo society and the punishment the chief used to mete out. In olden days, among the Mizo, there were very few cases of murder. It was so scarce that we could come to the conclusion that there were none. If a person accidentally or unintentionally killed someone, the punishment was death. The chief did not punish the wrong doer. According to the Mizo code or law, the chief gave permission to the family or relations of the victim to kill the culprit. In that case, it seemed as if the penal code of the Mizo did not forbid or prohibit revenge. It seemed, they believed an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, tit for tat, – a life for a life. But there were strings attached to the chief's permission. There was one condition. If the murderer was able to escape and run into the chief's house and hugged or embraced the main post inside the chief's house, supporting the ridge pole, it was unlawful for the persuer to kill him. If he did so, it would be detrimental to the law laid down by the chief. The murderer who embraced the post inside the chief's house became a slave of the chief for life–time. In 1890 A.D. when the British ruled Mizoram, the Superintendents prohibited any and such kind of revenge.

The general fine paid by wrong doers was a full grown mithun. The chief and his elders used to hold court and decide the fines. The offence or miscreancy could have been not giving the chief "Sachhiah" (the left leg and shoulder of an animal killed in a hunt or caught in a trap). In case of defamation of character of a maiden or women; or for neglecting an illegitimate child, according to the offense the chief's court stipulated the fine of a 'Sial' (a full grown mithun) or a "Tlai sial" (a half grown mithun). During the British rule a 'Sial' was valued at 40 rupees and a "Tlai sial" at 20 rupees. The person found guilty had to pay the

fine to the opposing party. In addition to the fine he also paid the “Sa-lam” which was divided among the chief and his elders for their trouble in settling the case. The ‘Sa-lam’ or court fee was a full grown sow, which was killed and eaten by the chief and the village elders.

In some cases the Sa-lam was 5 rupees, in some cases (depending on the case) it was a pot of ‘Zu’ (rice beer). Sometimes the verdict or decision was ‘Chalrem’ meaning that both sides or parties agreed to patch up their difference, meet half way and close the case. In that case no one was found guilty.

When the village court was held, the chief and his elders were extremely careful and circumspect. It was a closed court and nobody was allowed to listen. But when the case was between a youngman and a young lady, the whole village was allowed to listen. Those who had the desire to do so, sat crowded under the chief’s house, while others gathered together in the chief’s nextdoor neighbour’s houses and listened attentively to the remonstrations and expitulations of the accuser and the accused.

In the old days, if the Mizo lodged a complaint against his neighbours, he was regarded as a wrong doer and an abominable and atrocious man. Due to this those who were dissatisfied or malcontented were loathe to start a court case. They preferred to forbear, forgive and forget the slander, the slights, the spites, the sneers and any wrong done to them. To lose a case and pay a fine was regarded as disdainful, disgraceful and shameful.

It is a remarkable and notable that the Mizo chiefs were competent in settling disputes. They had the experience and acumen for it. The way they ruled their subjects is very interesting.

In the days of our ancestors, the villages and clans often raided each other. A large part of their lives was spent in fighting, defending and guarding what was theirs; and being alert and ever prepared and ready. The chief had three very important things to do. Let us take a look at them.

First, he had to defend his subjects against enemies, and wild ferocious animals. The villagers had to construct a palisade or

fence round their village. Near the entrance they constructed a “Kulhbing,” a stronghold where the women and children sought refuge when their village was raided. It also served as a watch tower, where the youngmen took turns doing a day or night shift twenty-four hour watch, to look out and be on the alert for approaching enemies. One of the most courageous Mizo Chief Nikuala, used to check the watch tower at midnight, to make sure that those on watch duty were keeping awake and alert. However, since there were no materials to build a wall, the palisade or fence was made of wood or bamboo.

To be ready for any emergency, all the youngmen slept in the Zawlbuk. To be ready and prepared, they slept with their weapons such as knives, spears, bows and arrows, even olden day guns near at hand. They had to live according to the Mizo proverb which states that, “A man and a bull buffalo must always be prepared, ready and alert.” The exceptional, outstanding youngman among them who could advice, counsel, plan and make quick decisions was automatically and naturally their leader. These born leaders were respected and naturally were admired by all the people in their village.

There was no regular army at that time, so all males between 15 and 50 years of age took part in the fighting. The whole village combined and made an effort together. They were like one big family. When a man-eating tiger or enemies entered the village and the alarm was shouted, the youngmen coming out of the Zawlbuk could be likened unto the hive of the ‘Khawichhunmu,’ (which means bee that sleeps in the day time, a nocturnal bee that does not produce honey). The chief took part in raids and in wars; and was in the forefront. During the war of the north and south in Mizoram, even the great chief of the north Vanhnualiana participated.

Because of his position, the chief had to be outstandingly courageous and head and shoulders above others in altruism. He had to be ready to offer his life whenever it was necessary to defend his subject against enemies and beasts. For that, his people had a high regard for him; they respected and honoured him. As

an incentive for a courageous and chivalrous man among his subjects, the chief and his upas (elders) devised the custom of the 'Big Cup' (Nopui), from which the person to be honoured was the first to drink "Zu" on the first night of the 'Chawngchen' which lasted three days. It was a joyful sacrificial feast held to honour someone. It was wise and praiseworthy of our ancestors and chiefs to devise the award.

Secondly, the chief had to see to it that they were self-supporting. Besides not going all the way to another village to buy grain, if it was possible the chief urged his subjects to produce a plentiful and abundant supply and even be able to produce in addition enough for another village at the same time. To be able to achieve that goal, the youngmen and maidens and the ordinary people used to compete with each other. They left the village at dawn and returned from their jhooms only at dusk. This made them industrious and brought about patience in them; and to them, nothing was more contemptible than laziness.

While taking a stroll, when the chief came upon a youngman loitering or visiting a girlfriend, the chief would say, "Well, my boy, you're taking rest from your toil. Tiredness disappears in a day or two. Let us endeavour to produce enough food to support our neighbouring villages." In this way he would encourage the youths and they would never be seen loitering in the streets. The great chief Lallula also encouraged and urged his people in the same way on the occasion of the massacre of the Thlanrawns.

On the other hand the chief gave aid to the handicapped, the valetudinarian families and those who were unable to work. When necessary, the whole village provided aid and they were able to pull them out of their predicament. Nevertheless, in the ancient times of the Mizo, it was shameful to be aided by their neighbours. It was regarded as breaking the law of self-denial. Every family did its best to be self-supporting, self-sufficient and help others in their need. So it became necessary to be quick in understanding to look out for families who were in dire straits, yet did not talk about their difficulties. In this way, they were able to get their difficulties and the difficult times faced by them.

During famines when many were facing death, nobody was neglected. The core of Mizo life in bygone days is depicted in this Mizo proverb, “Live, and live together on one hill top; die, and die together in one valley.”

Thirdly, if they were safe from beasts and enemies, and if they were independent and self-supporting, there was another important thing the chief had to do. He had to make them united. They had to get along with each other. His subjects had to live happily together. So the chief had to be courteous. To bring about amiability, amicability and fraternity among his subjects, when he made decisions in court cases, and in every thing he did, he had to be fair in all his dealings. He had to be careful that no one suffered too much from his verdicts and decisions.

They had their rules and regulations and penal code. And though they had no written language, they possessed an excellent law which was quite clear in their hearts and minds. They were aware of everything that happened in the village. At night when anyone took unseemly liberties with a sleeping maiden, or if there was a burglary – the next day, the chief and elders received information regarding these things, and they settled these matters expeditiously.

The customary law of the Mizo was not made by wise men within a day or two. It came into being gradually from their life and daily experience. It grew and matured from the outline laid by Pu Kawlha and his followers in the days of the sizable village – Selesih 7000. For 300 years the Mizo lived agreeably together. They leaned on each other and depended on each other. What was necessary for society or the community was good and advantageous for the chief. What was good for the chief was good and beneficial for the people. Nobody wanted a bad name. No one wished to be despised; so they treated each other with goodness and kindness. In this way they shaped and patterned a way of life which was coveted even by civilized nations of this world.

The good customary law of the Mizo which came into being during the 300 years of Mizo life and experience was compiled

by N.E. Perry (1924-1928) in 1927, after collecting advice from 56 Mizo chiefs. In 1928 it was published in a book titled *Mizo Dan*. The opinion of many people is that N.E. Perry did not make the Mizo customary law. He questioned 56 Mizo chiefs about the laws they laid down in their villages. He noted down all their answers and simply compiled the book of Mizo customary law. It is definitely impossible for a Superintendent who stayed in Mizoram for such a short time to ruminate and ponder and produce the Mizo customary law.

In the Mizo customary law, among its rules there are two which are not clear to some people, even among our old people. They are the “Tlangchil” and the “Tlangsawi.” The verdicts or decisions were made in the Zawlbuk. Let us try to explain the difference between them.

The “Tlangchil” was discussed and decided by the youngmen, headed by the “Val upa” in their dormitory – the Zawlbuk. Some youngmen had visited a house to court a young lady. The parents had been haughty, blunt and brusque discourteous and uncivil. It may have been the fault of their daughter – the young lady; she may have angered the youngmen by being taciturn, uncommunicative or reticent; or she may even have gone to bed and left them to sit and chat by themselves. In any case the girl or her parents had angered the youngmen. So the “Tlangchil” (punishment administered by the whole village or community) was discussed in the Zawlbuk. When the decision to punish was in the affirmative, the youngmen came out of the Zawlbuk in a body.

When they reached the house of the young lady concerned, they dismantled the steps leading up to the house, roughly, angrily and in a business like manner; or they might have dismantled the bamboo matting walls of the house. The parents of the girl dared not take offence. In fact they even pleaded forgiveness. In all that, the chief remained indifferent. He never lifted a finger against the youngmen. He knew that he would need them in the future when enemies or wild beasts attacked the village; so he was on their side surreptitiously.

The customary law known as “Tlangsawi” was almost the same as “Tlangchil”. In this case the guilty one was manhandled by the youngmen. It was like ‘lynching’ but not the fatal kind. “Tlangsawi” meant the punishing or breaking in, meted out by the community to a person who is known to be a bad hat, but could not be caught in the act red-handed. The youngmen used to catch him and beat him up in a secluded spot. The person never knew his assailants, nor by whom he was punished. He could not report it or make a case out of it, because it was known that the chief aided and abetted with the youngmen without appearing to do so.

Having their house dismantled or being broken, was regarded as the utmost shame by the Mizo community in bygone days. Eventually it even caused them to shift to another village.

In that way the chiefs used to look after their subjects like the head of a family or a hen with her chicks safe under her wing. They regarded Mizoram as their land: “Our land, which shall be inherited by our children and our children’s children!” They declared and claimed Mizoram, as a tiger protects its kill or young ones with its body and by growling! They also guarded their land so that noone, not even other descendants of Mizo could enter and settle there.

In northern Mizoram the descendants of Lallula guarded the land against those who tried to enter from the east across the river Tiau. They even tried to extend their land towards the east. In the northeast, Lalsavunga and his son Vanhnualiana also pushed eastwards. In the State of Manipur, far to the north of Churachanpur, on the western bank of the Tuibangpui lake (now known as Loktak lake) in a place called Moirang, they used to go on hunting and raiding parties and camping in the jungle. They even built a temporary house in Moirang to start a new village.

In southern Mizoram, the descendants of Rolura prevented, blocked and barred other tribes from entering their land. They

claimed the whole of south Mizoram as their own. The descendants of Manga: Suakpuilala and Bengkhuaia, did not like it, when the British cultivated tea on wide plantations on the plains of Silchar. Exclaiming, “They are spoiling our elephant grounds where we hunt and they are making tea gardens on our land,” they raided and attacked the British owned tea plantations without mercy. In fact, Bengkhuaia slew an Englishman named James Winchester, and abducted his little daughter “Zoluti” (Mary Winchester) born of the Meitei (Manipur) wife on the 23rd of January 1871.

That was the way in which the Mizo chiefs and their subjects guarded and protected Mizoram with verve and courage. They were ready and daring to offer their heads, their limbs and their lives to protect their land against other tribes and nations. They established themselves as a nation and survived to make the land we possess which is now known as “Mizoram.” To achieve this, they utilized courage, diligence, patience and altruistic self-denial (Tlawmngaiha). They never dallied or loitered in the streets, and they had no time to be sloppy, slipshod or negligent.

They lived a life of freedom and self-rule for 300 years, and they not only protected Mizoram, but also originated and brought into existence the real, true, pure Mizo way of life. It was a grand, achievement. This pure Mizo life was seen in every aspect of their daily lives. The aim and object of this book is to sift and bring this to the surface, and to exhibit and expose to view the true Mizo way of life. That pure Mizo life was lovely and amounted to useful and purposeful living. Dwelling among them one found relaxation, peace and contentment. The traits and characteristics of the Mizo were self-denial, bravery, diligence, a full and complete surrender and capitulation of self-to self; to the community and to its unity. On the other hand, they took a pride in being meek and humble.

A Superintendent of Mizoram, Mac Donald (1943-1947) said, “Compared to other customary laws, your laws may not

be perfect; but it formed itself exactly in harmony with your daily life. It is important that you safeguard it and keep it intact. If you make changes in what you think is not good in it, you will only spoil, ruin and play havoc with all that is good in your customary laws.”

Another Superintendent, McCall (1931-1943) said, that the Mizo customary laws was excellent. It is said that he even went so far as to say that, “Such an excellent way of life produced by such a naïve and simple tribe, could only mean that, sometime in the past they must have dwelt among a great nation such as the Chinese.”

In that way, the Mizo chiefs ruled over their subjects for 300 years and shaped and patterned the good, pure, true Mizo life; but some of the chiefs lorded it over their subjects and the common people. The maladministrations of the over-proud chiefs was difficult to bear, and it can be realized and understood from a song the children sing when they played together in the street:

*“Dictators we rule,
Sailo dictators are ruling;
Sway our heads from side to side,
Wave our arms from side to side;
We stamp our feet the harder –
More harder!”*

Due to the characteristics, status and power of these supreme rulers, the following expressions, naturally appeared in the Mizo language, “They who stroll between the sun and the moon,” or Like a Sailo riding the sun,” and “As firm as Sailo monuments.”

Many of the chiefs were good rulers and got on agreeably with their subjects. But once in a while, a few of them were cruel and opportunistic and used their powers wrongly. They exploited the weak, the poor and even the well to do. Just before

the year 1890, before the British entered Mizoram, these greedy, selfish chiefs used to find fault with their rich subjects. Even those who were not guilty of any wrong, were accused and their possessions were confiscated (the Mizo word for this was 'Ram'). They sometimes deprived or openly robbed the common peoples pigs and killed the animals for their own consumptions. They even cut off the lobes of people's ears and snatched their earrings. According to Rev. Liangkhaia, there were some who even "Pierced and stabbed a person's heel with a spear, just for the fun of it!"

These atrocities are depicted in a song sung by children:

*"Bingte, Sailo thieves,
The Sailo thieves have come to rob;
Open, shut there's no need to sob.
Hid them as a snail in her shell.
My mithun-
I have hid well, I have hid well.
Where is it?"*

The gist of this song is: A girl named Bingte was warned that, "The Sailos who were robbers are coming." And Bingte answered, "I have hidden my property just as the snail hides in its shell. If they look for my mithuns, I have also hidden them where they cannot be found."

Now we will talk about an incident which is a part of our Mizo history. It was first and last of its kind. It was known in the Mizo tongue as "Lal sawi." It means the punishing and breaking in of chiefs. This incident happened just after the war of the east and west of Mizoram (1877-1889) came to an end. Moreover, it happened in a village of the descendants of Vuta; and the village was situated in southeast Mizoram.

It started in the village of Hmawngkawn. The chief of Hmawngkawn was Vanphunga. The people in the village who were dissatisfied, displeased and vexed, rounded up the chief and the upas (elders) who were on his side. They made each of their

prisoners hold burning firebrands in their hands. They poured water into a trough till it was full, and forced the chief to immerse the burning end of the firebrand in the water, and made him repeat a vow as follows:

“Just as this firebrand is extinguished, so let my chieftainship be extinguished!”

In the same way, the village elders were also forced to repeat a vow:

“If I back up, align myself or side with the chief again, I will be doused and extinguished like this!”

This incident caused repercussions. Like a forest fire, other villages followed suit, and many despotic, tyrannical and overbearing chiefs among Vuta’s descendants in southeast Mizoram were stripped of their authority, power and their chieftainship. In short, they were sacked!

Like a frightened rabbit, Vanphunga, the chief of Hmawngkawn scurried to Lungtian village, where Lianphunga a descendant of Suakpuilala was the chief. “Go and confiscate anything you like from anybody in my village,” he said to Lianphunga.

Accompanied by Lalhluma, fearless, Lianphunga went to the village of Hmawngkawn. The people of Hmawngkawn had placed a bamboo horizontally on the ground at the entrance to the village and had gathered there inside the village ready to defend it with guns and other weapons.

“If you cross over that bamboo, we’ll shoot you for certain!” they said.

At that, proudly proclaiming and invoking his own name, as was the custom of the Mizo when attempting a difficult feat, the courageous Lalhluma suddenly crossed over the bamboo.

“None other than myself, Lalhluma! Lallula’s grandson! Its impossible for me to die an unnatural death!” he shouted.

The petrified villagers of Hmawngkawn dared not shoot him, and the gun of Luahmanga, the only person daring enough to do so, misfired! Pandemonium ensued; and many of them cried out: "I accept our chief! I'm on his side. The extinguished firebrand is burning again!" while others dared not use their guns.

Terribly afraid of Lalhluma they scattered helter skelter with Lalhluma chasing after them; and Lianphunga took whatever he wanted to his heart's content. By the bravery and virtue of the good chiefs, the bad chiefs were able to regain their chieftainship and rule over their subjects again.

This 'punishing and braking in of the chief (Law sawi)' was like the 'French Revolution' and the 'Russian October Revolution' of 1917. Though the Mizo 'Lal sawi' did not shake the world, it is an important event which cannot be omitted from the history of Mizo. Living a simple life they had no written language and no literature; but it is quite clear and understood from the above incident that they were aware of their human rights; and it is lucid to the present new generation that our ancestors dared to fight against those who did wrong, and those who abused their power and authority.

Though a few of the Mizo chiefs needed to be manhandled and broken in, many of the chiefs were competent rulers. Many of them were respected and loved by their subjects. The taxes and tributes were light and bearable. Under them their people were safe from enemies and wild beasts; and they were self-sufficient regarding food and their daily needs.

The Mizo chiefs established Mizoram and together with their subjects, they protected it against other tribes. They were ready to lay down their lives to safeguard their boundaries. Upto the present day, we the present generation still possess "Mizoram" the land they established. And that is not all, during the 300 years, they invented and formed the true, Mizo way of life.

To respect elders; to respect acquaintance, friends and neighbours; to contrive to live for the benefit of the community;

to be diligent; to be reliable, trustworthy, patient and bear pain stoically; to be brave and courageous; and last but not the least to practice courtesy, self-denial, chivalry and altruism.

There were the ingredients, the pearls of great price that made up the great Mizo way of life; and it was invented, formed, set up and established by our ancestors. The words contained in a song composed by the poet and song writer, Rokunga are right and true and acceptable:

*“The good laws that were laid down,
By brave forebears are find;
For friends, they laid their lives down,
Their fame spread far and wide.”*

In 1890 British annexed Mizoram completely, and a Superintendent was appointed to rule over Mizoram from Aizawl the capital. A new way of life was introduced in Mizoram. Things that ears and eyes had not seen or heard came to stay in Mizoram. which things changed the life of the chief and the Life of the community. Let us take a general view of those things and the changes that were caused by them.

The Mizo chiefs occupied their usual positions and they were allowed to levy the same tributes and taxes from their subjects. But on the other hand, administration was placed entirely in the hands of the Superintendent. As for the chief, instead of looking to the welfare of the Mizo people, he was obliged to regard his duty and responsibility to aggrandize and make the British Empire more firm. Consequently, the relationship between the chief and his people changed gradually, step by step.

In the olden days the youngest son of the chief inherited the chieftainship; but according to the British custom, the eldest had to inherit his father's chieftainship with all its responsibilities. The British gradually changed the Mizo customs of inheritance. They made the eldest inherit the chieftainship while the youngest son inherited the chiefs house, all his money, everything in the chiefs house and even the gardens and cultivation plots.

Mizo villages are situated on hill tops and if there were any hill tops without villages on the land of that particular chief, the Superintendent would make the brothers of the new chief start new villages on those hill tops; so the number of chief and villages increased. There is a Mizo proverb which states that, "Chiefs beget chiefs, but hills do not beget hills." Whereas there were only 60 chiefs in 1890, there were 350 chiefs in the year 1950.

This cunning, crafty, subtle policy must have been invented by the British. They divided the big communities into many small communities to facilitate ruling them, and to make it difficult for them to start a revolt, a rebellion or an insurrection. Some call it the divide and rule policy, and it was manipulated cleverly in Mizoram.

When the British ruled Mizoram, government officials and guests in Mizoram often needed partners and the villagers had to do forced labour. This coolie work was troublesome and a great burden for the villagers. The chiefs elders, the 'free' (libertine) relations of the chiefs, the priest, the medicine man, the 'Khawchhiar' (the village writer, registrar or clerk), the blacksmith and the village crier were all exempted from doing forced labour as coolies. It was the chief who appointed the above positions; and so, as day follows night, it was quite natural that those who wished to be exempted from this coolies labour indulged in sycophancy. In their eagerness to be appointed to these coveted positions in the village; they befriended the chief, gave him presents and bribed him to obtain these positions by hook or by crook.

In the olden days, before the year 1890, the position of a village crier was regarded as below the dignity of many people in the village. The chief used to appoint a person from among the low class. But times had changed, and the village crier was exempted from forced coolie labour; so there was great competition in the whole village, to win this lowly, humble position!

There were no more war – no more raiding excursions; and the work of protecting the land and the villages was the responsibility of the government. The ferocious wild beasts of the jungle gradually decreased and there was no need for the people to defend their village against attackers or marauders. Even the mainstay of the community – the Zawlbuk, where all the youngmen used to sleep together, ready to do or die if an emergency or occasion arose – had no meaning in the new way of life.

As for the chiefs, their main intention was to mollify, satisfy and please the Superintendent, who had the power to appoint or sack a chief. The chiefs began to neglect their responsibilities towards their subjects. The people bribed the chief; and the chief put forth his best efforts to please the Superintendent. The unity and fraternity of the community and the atmosphere of happiness and fellowship gradually disappeared.

At the same time, trade and business, higher education, government employment and a new religion – Christianity – came upon the scene. These were all truly good things. Without them, there could be no progress. Though the doctrines and teachings of christianity could be seen in a better light as compared to the religious outlook of our ancestors yet we cannot overlook the lively tradition and culture of our ancestors!

As time went on, and new things entered into our land and life, we Mizo began to despise our own national dress, and even the customs and traditions that controlled our daily lives. It is said that one of our oldest and most prominent minister, Pastor Challiana (1890-1969), once exclaimed, “Instead of living this pleasure seeking, gregarious life, it would be far better for us if we returned to the religious restrictions and teachings of our forebears.”

The true and beautiful life and customs of the Mizo which blossomed for 300 years (1580 to 1890), changed considerably within 60 years (1890-1954), when the Mizo chiefs ruled their

people. Just as the power and the authority of the chiefs declined; in the same way, the Mizo life and customs, deteriorated.

The Mizo ethos like respect for elders; respect towards each other; diligence, honesty, courage, working for the welfare of community and self-denial; all of which formed the ancient life of the Mizos, gradually disappeared.

4. SYSTEM OF CULTIVATION

According to recorded history, the Mizo have earned their living by cultivating paddy. Even nowadays, many of them make their living and subsist in the same way. There is a firm relationship between the jhoom and the daily life of the Mizo.

Searching for Suitable Jhoom Sites

For choosing suitable Jhoom sites the chief and elders asked the advice of the hunters and warriors. They requested detailed description such as: whether it had been a long time since the area was last used for cultivation; whether the soil was good especially for growing paddy.

When the “Nganbawm” flowers bloomed, and the birds began to suck the nectar from those flower, it was regarded as the time to search for a place for their jhooms. Generally, the time for selecting the area for the jhooms was at the end of January or the beginning of February.

Generally the chief's brothers who did not have any village or subjects to rule, were given first choice, together with the close and distant relations of the chief (they were known as the ‘Zalen’ – free for libertines) to choose their plots. After they had selected their plots, the next preference was for village elders and those who helped the chief in his administration. The third group composed the prominent men of the village. They had large families and were well to do. The chief usually took paddy from their storage to give to needy families in his village. When the chief had important guests the prominent men used to supply food and drink; and they were able to accommodate strangers and guests. These prominent men (Ramhual) were very useful to the chief. After this, the remaining people selected one jhoom siks.

The village crier announced the day of selection and the people set out from the village to make their claims; and there were certain rules they had to abide by:

- (a) If they had a certain spot in mind and made a bee-line for it, they had to get there first;
- (b) Elders were to be respected and given priority;
- (c) If it was a “vauchher” (reserved by someone) he must be given priority;
- (d) If someone had been setting traps and had trapped wild animals in the area, he was given priority.

On the day proclaimed by the “Tlangau” (village crier), all the villagers set out from the village. They claimed their plots and depleted the big trees of their leaves and branches; they cut down bamboos and bushes; they erected a cross of wood or bamboo to mark the site they had chosen and staked their claims. They trimmed the bark and outer layer of the large trees and left evidence around the site they had chosen. A ravine or small valley between two hills was regarded as a boundary – they had a saying or maxim: “Never cross a boundary set by the guardian spirit of an area” (Khuavang rikham sa an pel ngai lo). Nobody ever tried to claim or wrest an area that had evidence made by the owner.

If two or three persons made a bee-line for a certain spot and arrived at the same time, the eldest would say, “Since I am the eldest, you who have consideration for others will have to search for another place for your jhooms,” and they would relinquish their claim. In some cases, where they were unable to reach an agreement, the chief and village elders eventually had to settle it. With great respect they followed the four rules laid down, which we have already mentioned. If according to the second rule, the younger person would not relinquish his claim to the older person, they would use the first rule to find out which claimant arrived first. If they arrived simultaneously, they tried the case on the third rule. If during the last year a person had courteously

given it to others in self-denial, and had made a jhoom in the further most part of the area chosen for that year (ram tuk), and the jhoom site in question (the bone of contention) lay adjacent to and adjoined his last year's jhoom, it was naturally and automatically reserved by him for future use. That was the meaning of "vauchher" in rule number three, and he was given priority and was entitled to it.

If a man had been successful in trapping wild beasts in the area in question, and had been giving the left fore limbs of the trapped animals as "Sachhiah" tax to the chief, he would be given priority according to rule number four if there was any dispute.

Among the Mizo, if a person has offsprings, they do not address him by his own name. If his eldest chief's name is "Muani," he is addressed as "Muani Pa." The person whose jhoom site is adjacent to Muani Pa's jhoom would describe the boundary between their jhooms by using 'you' 'me' and 'I' in lieu of the boundary line.

"If the adjacent jhoom belonged to Muani Pa, the boundary line between our jhooms will be as follows: starting at the top of the hillock where there is a big chestnut tree (thingsia), you will come down beside me. At the tree whose blossoms are white, with purple markings (zihnghal), I'll cuddle a bit; and where it is convenient you'll lie prostrate, while I apply pressure to your bottom. On the hillock, where there is a big chilauni tree (khiang), you'll have to bend upwards a bit and when we reach the pleasant level ground, we'll come to a nice-fitting and agreeable arrangement."

A person would never use the same jhoom site again. It was taboo. They have a saying: "My lost chicken has come home again – it is usually killed and eaten." That was why making a jhoom on the site of one's old jhoom was regarded as inauspicious, unlucky and fatal.

The village crier would announce that each family must cut and clear their jhoom sites so that the area of the jhoom would

be able to produce sufficient paddy for each family for the next year. And so, they would set out to fix a complete boundary around their respective jhooms. The number of members in each family was not the same, so the size of the jhooms were also not the same. They calculated the amount of paddy a jhoom would produce in the following way:-

One basket (daw-rawn) full of seeds would produce 100 loads of paddy, and it was enough for one year for a man living alone. He would weed and take care of the jhoom himself and would harvest enough paddy for one year. So his jhoom would be wide enough for sowing one 'daw-rawn' full of paddy.

If there were three able bodied workers in a family, they would need a jhoom wide enough for sowing two basket (daw-rawn) full of paddy seeds; and they would harvest one 'Kakzawn' (200 loads) of paddy.

For a family that had four or five able bodied workers to look after the jhoom, it would be wide enough for sowing four 'daw-rawn' of paddy seeds. And it would produce a 'tu-ha-zawn' or 'hrei-ha-zawn' (between 200 and 400 loads) of paddy.

For a very large family with six or seven able bodied persons, they would need a jhoom on which they could sow between five and seven 'daw-rawn' of seeds; and they would harvest a 'hrei-ha-zawn' or 'Si-lai-zawn' or 'mau-tlawn-zawn' (about 350 to 500 loads) of paddy.

When a man came home after choosing his jhoom, he used to underestimate by saying, "A forest fire has been through it; the ground is in appropriate; there are many big trees to be felled and its not as good as other people's jhooms."

Cutting the Jhoom

When the *Combax malabaricum* (phunchawng), a thornless cotton tree; the *Bombax insigne* (pang), a tree with spikes on its trunk and branches and whose purple flowers appear before the leaves; were in bloom it was a sign that it was time to cut their

jhooms. Generally the work of cutting their jhooms was done from the end of January to the beginning of March. It was tiring work. It entailed danger as they could accidentally die. The ancestors used to say that, "A man cutting a jhoom and a women in travail are both riding on a bier."

When they cut the jhooms they started at the bottom or at the foot hill and worked upwards. If it was bamboo, they cut them at ground level. If they came across trees they cut them down also. They bereft the big trees of their small branches and leaves and hewed a notch round the trunks; and eventually the trees died.

No matter what kind of vegetation for the best way of cutting a jhoom was to get rid of the plants by uprooting them. The undergrowth, the small trees, the saplings, the bushes and the shrubs were cut off neatly at the base. The work of cutting the jhoom was done carefully. The pointed little stumps sticking out of the ground would cause accidents and injury to those who inadvertently stepped on them.

When the jhooms were at a great distance from the village, those who cut the jhooms had to make a camp in the jungle. Twenty to thirty people would construct a temporary hut where they would eat and rest during the period of cutting the jhooms (Lo vah). For youngsters it was a convenient time to learn the Mizo way of life: Mizo altruism, self-denial and chivalry; Mizo assiduousness, diligence and industry; Mizo behaviour, courtesy, obedience and respect for elders. They were responsible for fetching water, firewood for cooking, serving the meals and washing. Besides these chores, they had to keep the hut and camp clean and tidy.

The campers were like one big family. They shared whatever they had and ate and drank together. If a person was injured accidentally, and someone had to take him home, those who went home did not worry about their unfinished work, because their fellow-campers continued and finished their share of work. Those who were the last to finish cutting their

jhooms were also helped. Those who helped them did so without expecting to be repaid. When they had all finished cutting their jhooms, they would all return together to their village happy with the thought that they had finished the most difficult and strenuous task of the year.

When they reached their homes, they would drink rice beer or wine, to rid their bodies of aches and pains. When they spoke about their work of cutting their jhooms, the understatement they used was: "There are too many creepers growing all over. It's more difficult to cut our jhooms than that of other people."

Burning the Jhoom

When the *Bauhinia variegata* (vau-be) was in bloom, it was time to burn their jhooms. To facilitate the weeding of their jhooms, they preferred to burn them before it rained. Usually they burnt the jhooms in the second half of the month of March. And if they were not ready by that time, it was burnt when the yellow raspberries in April (hmu-tau) were ripe. Burning the jhooms in the month of April made the work of weeding difficult.

Before burning their jhooms, they made sure that the forest lands for the next year's jhooms did not catch fire. They did their best to safe guard the forest areas.

Burning the jhooms was extremely dangerous. They had to be extra careful. The smoke which was thrown high up to the sky in the form of a giant mushroom! If it could be seen from the village, many of the villagers stopped whatever they were doing and would come out of their houses to watch the extra-ordinary spectacle. Even if their jhooms burnt well, they used understatements to describe it saying, "There's too many pieces of wood to be gathered and reburnt (mang-khawh). It didn't burn so well as other people's jhooms."

Gathering Burnt Pieces of Wood (Mang-khawh)

The day after the burning of the jhoom, the women folk went to their jhooms to sow vegetable seeds. To make sure of an early harvest, they sowed pumpkin, maize, mustard, millet seeds and yams.

To facilitate weeding they gathered together the burnt bamboo, wood and creepers which hindered their movements. They collected the debris and piled them in convenient places on their jhooms and re-burnt them. They called the burning of the debris “cha hal.” Those spots where they re-burnt the debris was used for growing vegetables. They did not sow paddy on the “Cha.”

After the work of the re-burning was done, they built huts for those who would be tending the jhooms during that year. The huts were sometimes converted into granaries during the harvest. The size of those huts depended on the number of persons who were to occupy them.

Sowing (Buh tuh)

When the chilauni (Khiang) trees were in bloom; when they heard the trilling of the cicadae; when they heard the mournful cry of the brain-fever bird and the chattering of the magpies; when the delicious fruit of the “kei-fang” shrubs and the vines of the “thei-chhungsen” were ripe, our ancestors knew, was time for them to sow their seeds.

The time for sowing was in the second half of the month of April and May. The sun was scorching hot which made the work of sowing miserable and tiresome!

The paddy seeds were shifted from home to the jhooms. When they were about to start sowing, the seeds were distributed. Each sower had a small flat basket with a strap. The small flat basket was called a “pai-per.” The strap went over the shoulder and diagonally across the chest, and the basket was carried on the back at the level of the waist.

The sower would go to the bottom of the jhoom and start sowing the seeds. They seemed to do the sowing without thinking how important the paddy seeds were for their sustenance. The sower took a handful of seeds from the ‘pai-per’! In the other hand he held a hoe with which he made a hole with one or two strokes. He dropped the seeds and never made sure whether they fell into the hole or not. The sower worked upwards speedily, which raised a cloud of dust – and they all looked as if they were trying to catch a chameleon.

Our elderly used to say that the Mizo sub-tribe Hmar (or Fenngo), knew how to enjoy the tiring work of sowing paddy. They were very friendly and fond of each other. When the day of sowing dawned, all the able-bodied went to the jhooms. The children and old men also followed them with gongs and drums and chanted the following ancient song:

*“I strike iron and drop the seeds,
I strike stones and drop the seeds.
When the monsoon showers fall,
The seeds will find their own holes,
Heih heih heih! Heih heih heih!”*

Singing with zest and gusto, they urged the sowers to move ahead. The sowers worked hurriedly, raising a lot of dust.

After reaching the top of the jhoom, some of the youngmen would realize that they were holding only the handles of their hoes! They had to go down all the way to the bottom of the jhoom to start again! In the hurry and confusion, they had been sowing seeds without any blades on their hoe! It is said that the Hmar (or Fenngo), Mizo sub-clan were the first to learn how to have fun and enjoy the exhausting work of sowing paddy seeds.

The owner of two jhooms would help each other by turns. Sometimes three or four owners would help each other by sowing in a revolving system. There were two way of sowing: either by all working abreast upwards, or by moving side-ways and upwards in a zig zag motion. The sowing was accomplished in a few days. The elderly have a saying, “A chameleon’s tail has never come

off because a person stamped on it – neither has anyone camped or spent the night in a jhoom during sowing time.” When they finished sowing they used understatement to describe their jhooms: “It has steep gradients making it difficult to move about; and there are too many stumps sticking out of the ground. It has cost us a lot of paddy seeds!”

Weedings (hlo thlawh)

When the “hnun-thlum” (like the cinnamon, a flowering tree, whose bark and leaves are sweet) and the “thing-saingal” (elephant-shine tree) – probably of the ixora species – are in bloom; and the “tawllawt” and “tuk-lo” (both these birds excavate holes in trees for their nests) are babbling heartily and noisily, our old people would know at once that it was time for them to do the weeding on their jhooms. Generally it was done at the end of May and the first half of the month of June. It was necessary for them to weed the whole jhoom at least three times. During some years, when the work was not too difficult, they weeded their jhooms five times. Each weeding was given a name from the first to the fifth. Let’s take a look at these five weedings:-

(a) The First Weeding (Hnuh-lak or Hnuh-pui)

In the first weeding the weeds had just sprouted and sprung up; the rice had not sprouted. The tender weeds which they severed would dry up due to the hot sun. There was no need for the weeders to be particularly careful. With the exception of those who were slothful and indolent, most of the people finished the first weeding within one month.

Like at the time of sowing, the first weeding was considered one of the most miserable and unpleasant job. The sun was burning and the ash and dust raised while weeding got into the eyes and nostrils and the air was full of dust. And to add to their misery, the vegetables and subsidiary crops were still not available! The fatigue was extremely hard to bear.

(b) *The Second Weeding (Hnuh-hram)*

When the “Jhoom-work-cicadae” were humming and the “song-song-bok-bok” cicadae responded from a distance; the cicadae which ‘called out the new cucumbers’ were also chirping incessantly; when the jungle fowls which came to glean the paddy seeds used to crow; when the “lengder” (swallows) glided easily, when flocks of sparrow – like ‘vapaws’ were seen, and the owl was seen swooping down to catch its prey in the shallow waters of the ravines; when the dry gullies and ravines were beginning to be fed by the monsoon rains; when crabs were seen crawling on the pathways and could be grabbed and caught easily; when the hair – like tassels started protruding from the points of the cobs of the maize; when the “pasi” and “pa-sawn-tlung” both edible fungus mushrooms – were growing on the *Ficus cunia* (thei-tit, small fig tree) and on the fallen logs of the *Derris robusta* (thing-kha); and when the dead forest giants standing in the jhooms shed their big decayed, rotting, leafless branches, it was time for the Second Weeding of the jhooms. The Second Weeding was usually done from the middle of June to the end of July.

By that time, the paddy, vegetables and greens sown would have sprouted; and the weeding had to be done carefully.

The Second Weeding was time consuming. A jhoom was not really regarded as a jhoom till the Second Weeding had been accomplished. It was extremely difficult to weed a wide area within one day. So, during the “Hnuh-harm” or Second Weeding, the people were very busy. The Mizo have a simile to describe how busy they are: “Hnuh-hram tul takin kan tul,” meaning “We are as busy as a Second Weeding.”

Those who were first to finish the Second Weeding were regarded as master of jhoom husbandry. That was why the “Hnun-hram” or Second Weeding was regarded as the most important stage in the work of cultivating rice or jhooming in a hilly country such as Mizoram.

In Mizoram, the longest day falls in the second half of the

month of June; which falls during the Second Weeding. The longest day is known to the Mizo as “The day on which Lalmanga’s mother employed worker.” Her real name is not known. She had two sons: Lalmanga and Vawnzamanga. The younger son Vawnzamanga and those who were under his control went to catch fish using herbal toxins. The stream they went to was the “Tuisa lui” (hot water stream). While they were fishing, enemies attacked them suddenly; and Vawnzamanga was killed in the fray. His body was buried on the bank of the Tuisa stream. His big brother Lalmanga also, did not live long. His mother outlived both of them.

It is believed that Lalmanga’s mother was the chieftainess of Hriangmual when the village was situated on its older site in the southern part of Phuaibuang area. Instead of taking ‘Fa-thang’ (the annual tribute or paddy) from her subjects, in lieu of the Fathang, she employed them to do some work for her, and chose the longest day in the year on which she employed them for one whole day.

One day, she struck her hairpin in the ground in front of her house, and discovered that the hairpin did not cast a shadow when the sun reached it zenith. She made a note of it and never forgot it. She had discovered the longest day in the year and made good use of her discovery. Every year, during the Second Weeding (Hnuh-hram kawih), in the second half of the month of June, she used to employ her subjects to work for her. And so, the longest day in the year in Mizoram came to be known as, “The day on which Lalmanga’s mother employed workers.”

The discovery of the longest day in the year by our ancestors can be regarded as an extraordinary and outstanding achievement.

During the Second Weeding, the “Fano Dawi” sacrifice was offered. An animal was killed and sacrificed to protect the growing rice crops on the jhooms from disease. The sacrifice was offered generally in the chief’s house in the evening; and the following day, no one was allowed to leave the village.

(c) The Third Weeding (A thual)

The Third Weeding was done in the beginning of the month of August. The rice and vegetable plants had grown quite big and it was not necessary to do the weeding gently or carefully. They just used the hoe with one hand and pulled out the weeds with the other hand, or just broke the stems. There was no fear of the paddy plants being choked by the weeds. Some families who were too busy with other work regarded it as the Fifth Weeding (A thet thet or pawhchhiat), while some even regarded the Third Weeding as the end of the weeding period (lo zawh).

In the jhooms, all kinds of rainy season vegetables and fruits were grown. This included cucumber, melon, musk-melon, maize, snake gourd, bitter gourd, brinjal, chilli (capsicum) bai-bing (bulbs of green leafy caladium). The people helped each other by turn just as they had done during the Second Weeding (hnuh-hram); but the work was much lighter. They rested whenever they wanted to, in the shade of the few trees in the jhooms.

They peeled and ate cucumber or melon – laughing and joking while doing so. Just as people throw flat stones across the surfaces of lakes and rivers; in the same way, Mizo youths cut off the ends of cucumbers and sent them spinning and gliding through the air over the valleys, ravines and jhooms. They would compete to see who could make the cucumber discs glide the longest and farthest. They would bring their best and choicest tobacco from their homes, roll cigarretes and offer them to their fellow-workers.

They suffered the heat of the sun and the showers of rain happily together. Time flew quickly for them and the days seemed too short.

They went home from their jhooms early. They carried baskets of vegetables and greens, and the children used to meet them at the entrance to the village. That was why the Third Weeding (a thual), was the most enjoyable. The Third Weeding, which was done in the first half of the month of August, was regarded as the most pleasant phase of Mizo life.

(d) The Fourth Weeding (a thial) and the Last Weeding (a thet thet)

To be able to harvest paddy, the weeding needed to be done at least three time. When they went to search for suitable jhoom site, they generally chose a site wide enough for them to be able to weed three times.

The “a thial” and the “a thet thet” or “pawh chhiat” were the Fourth and Fifth Weedings of their jhooms. Generally, these last two weedings were done only in years when the people were not too busy with other pressing work. And it was also done only by big families. However, it was said that it was desirable to do all five weedings. Those who were able to pull up the fourth and fifth crops of weeds were regarded as the best and most capable.

End of Weeding of the Jhoom (Lo zawh)

When the monsoon showers had a dry phase for a while, the ground and jungle paths became dry. The days were sunny and the skies were blue. Cotton like cumulus clouds took the place of nimbrus clouds. The rice plants were in their prime, and their stems had branched out at the top. The paddy leaves were tender and when the people looked at their jhooms, no other plants were to be seen. The jhooms seemed entirely covered with nothing else but paddy plants. When there was a soft breeze blowing, the paddy in the jhooms rippled and rolled in an undulating motion which was a breath-taking sight. It was the end of Weeding time. Usually this period was at the end of August and the beginning of September. It was the most pleasant time of the year, and the Mizo who cultivated jhooms used to wait eagerly for this occasion.

Long ago, they used to prepare in advance for the End of the Weeding time. The owners of jhooms brewed “Hranden zu” (alcoholic drink made by pounding the paddy, and without shifting it, they put it in a jar, husks and bran included, to ferment).

When the last weeding of jhoom was done, the owner of the

jhoom and those who helped him, gathered together at his house after dinner. Each of them would bring a jar of “Hranden zu”. They would take turns sucking zu from a jar using a bamboo tube called a “chat.” They poured a cup of water into the jar, and each person would suck one cup of zu each. The house owner’s neighbours would also take part in the celebration, bringing their own jars of “hranden zu”.

They all enjoyed themselves late into the night, singing together and dancing. As they continued their merry-making, “tin zu” was produced and mixed with the “hranden zu.” “Tin zu” is a white, milk like strong alcoholic beverage. The youth preferred the red “hranden zu”, because they could imbibe a lot of it without getting drunk easily. The white “in zu” was too strong for them.

When Christianity arrived in Mizoram, liquor was restricted and prohibited by the church. The End of Weeding was celebrated by having tea parties. They brewed delicious tea, using cow milk and sweetened it with sugar or ‘kurtai’ (brown sugar). They would reserve a small part of the jhoom unweeded for the last day of weeding. They would go to the jhoom the next day and finish the weeding before lunch time. The work was finished in no time. It was like a picnic. A chicken was killed and cooked in the hut on the jhoom and they would enjoy the meal together. Then they would go home early, joking and laughing all the way.

When the dark shadows fell, they gathered together in one house and sang hymns late into the night. To the Mizo, it was the end of Weeding time (lo zawh hun). For one whole year they had worked industriously, dreaming of this occasion and when it arrived they were very, very happy.

It was the time for resting their bodies. They were free from work and care, and the weather was fine. The Mizo Autumn season (Fa-vang) had arrived! It was the most pleasant season in Mizoram. They described it as the time when the land was full of smiling faces. The Mizo enjoy their autumn season in the last week of September and the whole of October.

Harvest Time (buh seng)

Harvesting had arrived. It was done in the month of November and the beginning of December. The families who believed they were going to harvest sufficient amount for the next year would be more happier than other families. During harvesting, in most cases, the harvesters slept and spent the nights in the jhooms. Even those who had jhooms near the village slept in the jhoom huts, because they were afraid the birds would feed on the paddy. When the jhooms were far away from the village, they had to sleep in their jhooms; and for some families even the children had to spend the nights in the jhooms.

During the harvest time, they used to wake up early in the morning. Before the sun rose they had already started working. As the weather was cold, their hands would become numb and it was difficult sometimes to hold the handle of the sickle. Even when the sun had set, they kept on working as long as they saw unharvested paddy before them.

There is a saying, "Grabing and snatching paddy during the harvest is the busiest work." Harvesting rice was not the same in the east and west of Mizoram.

(a) In West Mizoram, the harvesters used to carry a basket and a sickle. They used to cut off ears of the paddy, leaving the leaves and the stems, and dropped them over their shoulders into their baskets. When the basket was full, they emptied it into a big closely woven basket called a "tlam em." When the "tlam em" was full it was taken quickly to the hut where it was stored. One person was able to harvest about two "tlam em" in one day. This method of harvesting was called "buh par lak" (taking the rice flower).

They prepared a threshing ground and the youngmen threshed the paddy by stamping on it. The young ladies took the threshed paddy and separated the threshed from the unthreshed. Using an improvised make-shift broom, they swept the paddy till it became a mound. The unthreshed was separated from the threshed again

by stamping on it. Using bamboo poles, the young ladies would poke the straw and turn them over. It was difficult, tiring and exhausting work. The work would go on non-stop till it was all threshed. Those who had wide, extensive jhooms would invite many people to help them do the threshing.

As time passed, they learnt to make a “Fa-suar” (a threshing floor or platform). They erected four posts and made a platform about seven or eight feet high. The floor was a mat made of bamboo with holes big enough for the paddy to fall through. The threshing was done by stamping on the ears of paddy. Threshers were usually young people – joking, laughing and sometimes holding hands, they used to enjoy their work. The paddy would fall on the ground under the threshing floor, and soon became a mound. The women who worked below got rid of the paddy ears and straw that fell from above.

(b) In East Mizoram, the paddy plant was cut half way from the bottom with a sickle. The harvest was then tied with grass – like leaves of the paddy plant into sheaves (buh phal), and placed on the lower halves which had been trodden down. The ears of paddy were placed pointing upwards. They called this method of harvesting “buh ah” or “buh at.” The cutting was done by the youngmen, and the maidens followed behind them and tied the sheaves. They used to enjoy the work. The youngmen were able to cut four to five loads of paddy in one day, and soon there would be rows and rows of sheaves all over the jhoom; the sheaves were then left in the open air to be dried by the sun.

When all the paddy in a jhoom had been cut, they set a date for “buh vuak” (beating the paddy). It was another method of threshing. Actually they held the sheaf at the lower end with both hands and beat the ground with a thud, and the paddy fell from the ears. A threshing ground “hruih” was prepared and all the sheaves were gathered and carried to the threshing ground. Those who did not collect and carry the sheaves did the beating (threshing), and when all the paddy had fallen off the rice ears, the sheaf was thrown aside. They were able to thresh one “kak-

zawn” (about 200 loads of paddy) or more than a “kak-zawn” within one year).

Now let us discuss both methods of harvesting. After working the whole year, the day of threshing was a very important time for the Mizo. When the harvest was abundant, they invited their close relations to take a share of their paddy. They killed chickens or a pig, or even a mithun, and had a feast in their jhoom. They regarded it as the most joyful day.

After threshing the paddy, they made a conical mound of it to measure the amount of paddy they had harvested. They kept on tossing the paddy till the peak reached its highest point. Then they measured the distance from the foot of the mound to the peak. By measuring it in this way, they were able to find out how much they had harvested. When they transported the paddy to their homes in the village and counted the basket (daw-rawn) loads, they found that the measurement was approximately correct. The number of loads (one load equaled 3 kerosene tins) of paddy according to the measurements invented by our ancestors was as follows:-

Ke-thup

A person of average height stood toeing the foot of the mound. If the peak obstructed his view of the foot of the mound on the opposite side, it was said that the amount of paddy was “ke-thup.” That was equivalent to 30 loads of paddy.

Buh ke ban

The person stood at the foot of the mound of paddy and fell forward. If he could reach out and touch the peak, the amount of paddy was “buh ke ban.” That was equivalent to about 50 loads of paddy.

Fa-vah zai

It was measured in the same way as the above, but he held a sickle; and after falling forward, if he was able to swipe the peak with a sickle, the amount of paddy would be about 70 loads.

Chem sat

It was measured in the same way as “fa-vah zai,” but this time he would use a Mizo dao. If he could make a chopping motion with it over the peak, the amount would be about 100 loads of paddy.

When they harvested more than a hundred loads, they measured it by using a long, straight wooden pole or a bamboo. Generally, 100 loads was sufficient for a family for one year, and they regarded their efforts of cultivating paddy as successful. But on the other hand, the families with four or five able bodied workers regarded their efforts as unsuccessful if they harvested a mere one hundred loads. Let us describe how they measured the amount of paddy when they harvested more than 100 loads:-

Chhip zawn

They made the conical maund as high as possible and placed a long bamboo horizontally on it's peak. A man of average height stood at the foot of the maund; and if the top of his head and the peak was levelled and they were of the same height, the amount of paddy was “chip zawn,” equal to about 150 loads. When they measured the distance from the foot of the maund to the peak, it was about nine and a half feet.

Kak zawn

It was measured in the same way as the chip-zawn. A bamboo was placed horizontally on the peak, and a man stood at the foot of the maund and raised his arm up vertically. If the horizontally placed bamboo rested on the croth between the thumb and forefinger, the amount of paddy was about 200 loads. The distance measured from the foot of the maund to the apex was about twelve feet.

Tu-ha zawn or tu-thlawh zawn

Measured in the same way as “kak zawn,” but the man stood at the foot of the maund and held up his arm holding a hoe used

in weeding the jhoom. If the peak and the top of the hoe handle were of the same height, the amount of paddy was about 200 to 300 loads. The distance from the foot of the mound to the peak was about thirteen and a half feet.

Hrei-ha zawn

The same as “tu-ha zawn,” expect that the man held the end of the handle of an axe, and stretched his arm up vertically. If the top end of the axe handle and the peak were of the same height, the measurement was called “hrei-ha zawn,” and the amount of paddy was about 350 to 400 loads, and the distance from the foot of the maund to the apex was about fourteen and a half feet.

Those who harvested that amount regarded it as a great achievement; and even a large family would not be able to consume all of it in one year. When they invited others to help them during the threshing, they allowed each person to take home a basket full of paddy. Those who practiced self-denial (tlawmngaihna) would decline, and some would accept about half a basket; but the owner of the jhoom would cram the basket full, till they could hold no more, and literally force them to share his wealth.

Silai zawn

Measured in the same way as “hrei-ha zawn.” A long bamboo was placed horizontally on the apex and an ordinary sized man stood at the foot of the maund and held a gun at arm’s length vertically. If the apex and the top end of the gun were levelled, the measurement was a “silai zawn.” The distance from the foot of the maund to the apex was about 16 feet and the amount of paddy was 400 to 500 loads.

Harvesting such an amount brought fame and greatness to the family. Even their great grand children would boast about it. On the day of threshing, they invited the whole village to help them and would all be as busy as bees in a hives. The owner of the jhoom was bound to kill a mithun and prepare a feast. It was regarded as the happiest and most joyful day in the year.

When it was time to go home, the youngmen would bundle a sheetful of paddy each to sell and buy liquor for their own consumption. The owner of the jhoom would allow as much paddy they could carry. It was the desire of the owner of the jhoom to have as many people as possible to benefit from his achievement.

Mau-tlawn zawn

The measurement was done in the same way. A long bamboo was placed horizontally on the peak, and a man of ordinary height would stand at the foot of the mound and hold up a pole longer than a gun. The measurement was called “mau-tlawn zawn,” and the distance from the foot of the mound to the apex was more than 24 feet. There was no measurement over and above this. It was the greatest amount of paddy a man could harvest.

Harvesting a “mau-tlawn zawn” was a great blessing. Even a large family had to have special luck to achieve it. Very few people have obtained it, and it was known and spoken of once in a blue moon. Those who harvested that amount became famous, and if the individual name of the person was not mentioned, at least his village became famous and everyone would talk about it. The achievement would be known all over Mizoram.

Storage and Transportation of Paddy

A place was chosen for temporary storage so that the owners of the farthest jhooms would be able to carry their paddy to the spot arranged for it. It had to be a place convenient for all the owners of jhooms to build rough, make-shift barns, just big enough to hold the amount of paddy each had harvested. The barns were temporary huts.

The temporary huts were built close to each other, so that a person could just be able to move about between them. They were roofed carefully, so that the paddy would not get wet if it rained. For the same reason, bamboo mat walls were constructed so that the rain water would not splatter on the paddy. The floor was constructed as low as possible, so that they could fill their “daw-rawn” or “em-pai” baskets with paddy and lift their loads easily without anyone helping them.

To make the storage firm, they tied bamboos split in half or wooden poles round the walls. In that way, they would prepare their loads quickly and be able to make one or two trips in the morning and another one or two trips again in the evening between the village and the temporary storage barns.

After transporting all the harvested paddy from the threshing ground to the make-shift, temporary barns, they prepared storages for the paddy at home. Generally, when a family harvested 100 loads, it was stored in the house, near the sleeping place between the hearth and the front wall of the house. This bed or sleeping place on the floor was called the “khum-ai.” It was situated just inside the door and was the outer bed in contradiction to the “khum-pui” or “inner bed.” A “zem,” a large circular bamboo receptacle was constructed with split bamboo to form a bin for storing the 100 loads of paddy on the floor in the house, near the “khum-pui” (outer bed). There is a Mizo saying which goes like this, “With a circular paddy bin filled to capacity with a hundred loads of paddy in the house, it is comforting, reassuring and peaceful; and there is no fear of dying of hunger.”

A hundred and fifty loads of paddy (chip-zawn) or over and above that amount would hinder one’s movements in the house; and it would be too heavy. So they built a barn near their house to store the paddy. This barn was also called a “check in.”

Transporting or carrying all the paddy from the temporary storage near the jhooms to their village was called “buh thiar.” It was regarded as the responsibility of the women folk. When the men went to clear the jungle to cut their jhooms, on their way back they would carry home a load of paddy from the temporary storage huts. To carry and transport paddy sufficient for one family for one year, was tiring work. They tried their best to carry all the paddy home before they burnt their new jhooms. When the men finished cutting their new jhooms, they helped the women folk, and soon the work of transporting of paddy would be finished.

If their neighbour had not finished yet, they would practice the Mizo way of altruism and self-denial (tlawmngaihna). Without

boasting about it, courteously, chivalrously and altruistically, like the knights of long ago, the Mizo helped each other in many ways.

Such was the Mizo system of cultivation. There were stages and it entailed a lot of work. No one was taught how to do it. They just imitated from the veterans who were experienced in it. When it was time to go to the jhooms, they just followed suit; and when others stopped working and went home, they did the same. It was as elementary as that! In the old days, Mizoram had a small population, and the soil was good for cultivation. So it was not difficult to grow sufficient food. That was the reason why upto the year 1953, Mizoram was self-sufficient and self-supporting.

5. CLOTHING

According to the history of Mizo, it is believed that they were a nomadic tribe living in northwest China in the Province of Kansu, which was situated on the banks of the Tao river, who migrated southwards and entered Myanmar (Burma) in the year 800 A.D. Moving gradually down the banks of Chindwin river, they settled down in the Kabaw Valley in the vicinity of Khampat between the years 800 to 1300 A.D.

Our ancestors came in contact with the Burmese people and lived in peace with them. There is no mention of any enmity or war between the Burmese and the Mizo. There are many similarities in their way of life and in their languages. Quite a large number of games played by children are similar and the roots of about 70 words are of the same origin, except for a slight difference in pronunciation. In the Mizo language there are many names of fruits, vegetables and other things starting with the word 'Kawl: (The Mizos word 'Kawl' means Burmese). The Darkhuang (large gong of Burmese origin), the Darbu (set of three different sized gongs) and the Darmang (small gong) still play an important role in Mizo music, song and dance. These gongs originated during the period when they were living in close contact with the Burmese people and they took those gongs with them when they moved westwards.

In view of the facts mentioned above, it is believed that when the Mizo settled in the Kabaw Valley from 800 to 1300 A.D., their way of dressing must have reached quite a high standard. It is not known what garments they wore, but they must have dressed like the Burmese.

However, when the Chinese invaded Burma (Myanmar), in 1283 A.D. they raided and attacked the Mizo living in the Kabaw valley. They outnumbered the Mizo; had more advanced weapons

and were better armed. Consequently, the Mizo fled to the Chin Hills and settled in the region between the Than hill range and the river Run.

The region between the Run and the Than hill range was very difficult to cultivate rice, because the land was barren, rocky and steep. It was not an easy task to procure food and to subsist. Even in the present time, the people who are living in that area are finding it difficult, and their staple food consisted of yam, sweet potatoes, maize and fangra.

There is no mention of how they were attired, when they were settled in the Kabaw valley. During the period 1350 to 1450 A.D. when our forefathers had settled in the area between the Than Hills and the Run river, it was very difficult for them to obtain food to sustain themselves. As already mentioned, the people who are now living in that area subsist on yam, sweet potatoes, maize (Indian corn). They could not descend to the plains in the Kabaw valley to fetch a new clothes, because the Shans who had driven them out had occupied the Kabaw valley. Due to these circumstances, the culture and way of dressing of our ancestors had deteriorated and retrogressed.

According to our ancestors, the first and foremost garment was the “Siapsuap.” It was a lower garment (like a grass skirt), and it was worn by women. It was made of strips of fibers from the bark of a tree. The top of the Siapsuap was tied round the waist and was just long enough to cover their private parts. The men also covered themselves with kilts like the Siapsuap. Some of them probably used breechclouts or strings. That was how our ancestors were attired for the first four or five decades when they were living between the Run river and the Than hills.

During that period, most of the Mizos were unable to possess hoes for sowing and weeding. For this they used pointed sticks or the horns and antlers of deers. This is known and deduced from the following ancient Mizos couplet (song):

*See that deer, in the mist receding,
It's slender horn is a good hoe for weeding.*

Later on, when they were still living in the Than hills, the apparel of the Mizo women improved a bit. Besides the Siapsuap, they tied another short one, round the body just under the armpits to cover their breasts. The men also made kilts of Hruikhau fibre and tied it round the waist. The men's fibre trappings was called a "Hnawkhal." Gradually, the Mizo way of dressing improved.

When the Mizo started living between the Tiau river and the Lentlang mountain range, it was easier for them to obtain food as the land was more fertile. Their way of dressing and attire gradually improved. They inhabited this area from 1450 to 1700 A.D. The women's siapsuaps were made of finer strips of hruikhau. The men also made cloaks of hruikhau fibre, which covered their shoulders and chests.

After 1600 A.D., they moved closer to the river Tiau, and it seems they had learnt to weave cotton cloth. Instead of the siapsuap, the well to do among them wore short cotton skirts which reached down to their knees. But since they had not yet discovered dyes, the skirts and siapsuaps would have been made of plain white cotton cloth or thread.

As for the men, they just fastened a plain white cloth to their waists. That was how they clothed themselves in this simple way.

As time went on, the Mizo moved westward across the river Tiau, and in the year 1700 A.D. most of them settled in the area which is now known as Mizoram. They had progressed much. Their standard of living improved. Their way of dressing improved. The cloth they wove using hand-looms had improved. They had also discovered a black dye which they called 'Ting' (pronounced 'tring'). Using this black dye, the first design they learnt to weave was called "Hmar-am." Later on, they learnt to extract red dye from the barks and leaves of certain trees and plants. This enabled them to use three colours – red, white and black. The designs they produced became more definite, well-defined, distinct and precise and the various sheets, each with a different design were named – "puandun, mangpuan, ngotekherh, puanrin, tawlhlohpuan, etc."

To make their cloth more prettier and the designs more interesting, they copied the works of nature and wove beautiful flower designs and produced lovely materials such as the 'kawkpui-zik-zial,' the 'len-buang-thuam' and many other designs. These beautiful coloured garments were worn on Sundays and important days. The thick, durable white garments were used while working.

As years rolled by their knowledge and wisdom developed. Their hand-loom improved and they were able to weave the beautiful tri-coloured "Kawrlaisen" (Kawrchei) jacket and the red, white and black "Puanlaisen" (Puanchei) kilt, which are now regarded and accepted as Cultural dress of the Mizo.

6. CHILDREN'S GAMES

The Mizo have a large variety of games played by children. Some of the games they play passed on handed down from generation to generation. These ancient games are engaging and fascinating. They are good for the children because they help to exercise the mind and the body. In the olden days there were no schools and these games kept the children engaged. They also played games during night. In Mizo, this is known as "Pawnto."

We know from the following song that children in England also used to "Pawnto."

*Girls and boys, come out to play,
The moon doth shine as bright as day;
Leave your supper and leave your sleep,
And join your play-fellows down the street.
Come with a hoop, come with a call,
Come with a goodwill or not at all;
Up the ladder and down the wall,
A ha'penny loaf would serve us all!*

- Anonymous.

The number of games played by Mizo children are legion: The children hold hands and form a circle, or they hold hands without forming a circle. Sometimes they form a line one behind the other and follow the leader; sometimes they stand in a row or circle, and each person puts his arm over the left shoulder of the person on his left, and his right arm round the waist of the person on his right. Sometimes the game is played in a sitting position and sometimes by couples and so on.

For the present we will not discuss all the games they played. We will only talk about few of the popular, prominent and well



Traditional pots used in Mizo houses.



Various domestic instruments made from different parts of trees.



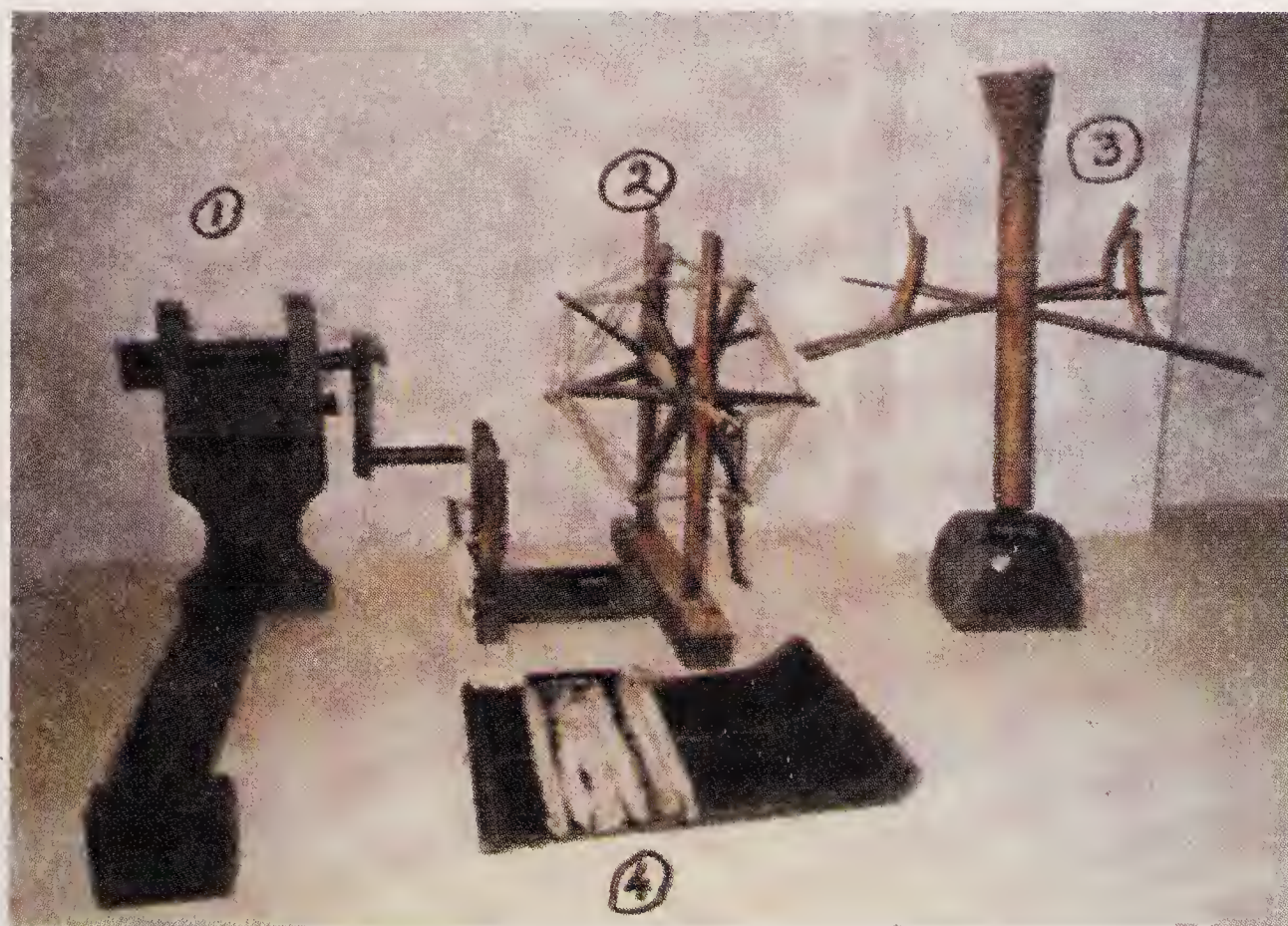
A pestle and mortar mainly used to grind rice.



Ladies grinding and chaffing rice.



Tobacco pipes were inseparable from daily routine of Mizo. Men and women both enjoyed smoking tobacco. Man's smoking pipe was called 'vaibel' (1) and women's smoking pipe was called 'Tuibur' (2).



Mizos were self-reliant in many ways. They used to weave, dye and prepare their own clothes. (1) Cotton-gin "herawt", (2) spinning wheel 'hmui', (3) cotton winding machine 'suvel' and (4) roll of cotton ready for spinning 'lachawn'.



Women are working on cotton winding machine 'suvel', prepares cotton threads for weaving in 'la-din-lek' and preparing raw threads on 'hmui'.



Cleaning raw cotton 'la sai' and preparing raw cotton at 'herawt'.

known ones, which have meaning and purpose. Let us take a view of how the Mizo children played in bygone day.

Games Played by Girls

In-kawi-bah

This is the most popular game played by girls, till they reach puberty. It could be played by two friends or two teams.

Some would even cheat and argue at every stage of the game. And if they realized they were going to lose they made various excuses to stop or end the game. The winners would scoff and ridicule them by singing the following song:

*Down-heated! Badger did bite,
The bite caused a three years cyst!*

The kawi bah game was good for exercising the mind and the body. It helped the children to be healthy, agile and nimble. Besides, many meaningful words were used in the course of the game.

In-u-len

This game is played by two or more girls. There are many way of playing this game. We will describe only one of them. The following song was sung when they played this game.

*Chiefs we rule,
We Sailo chiefs rule;
Sway our heads from side to side,
Wave our arms from side to side,
We stamp our feet the harder,
More harder!*

They form a circle and hold hands. While singing the first two lines, the circle moves round, clockwise or anticlockwise; while singing the third line, they stand and sway their heads from side to side; when singing the fourth line, they wave their arms from side to side; at the fifth line, they strike the soles of their

feet on the ground; at the last line, they stamp harder; then they start all over again from the beginning.

Though this song was sung by children at play, the literature is of a high standard. The whole song describes the characteristics of the Sailo chiefs. It is significant and worthy of note.

Games Played by Boys

Personating or Simulating a tiger

The boy who plays the tiger ties one end of a strip of cloth round his waist and lets the other end hang like a tail. He would then crawl around looking for prey. Stealthily he would stalk his friends who were playing happily together. He pounces upon one of the youngest boys and drags him away. The other boys would chase him and when they caught him, they would pretend to slash him with knives, made of wood and pierce him with bamboo spears. The tiger would escape and run away to lick his wounds, growling with anger and dissatisfaction. The boys who saved their friend would carry him on an improvised stretcher. In a few minutes, he is well and they are playing happily together again.

The hungry tiger carries off another little boy. All the boys chase the tiger and finally overtake it. They attack and assault the wild beast and rescue their little friend.

The tiger runs away. Two or three boys spy on him and discover his den. They call the other boys and all go to the tiger's den – but the crafty, cunning creature hides and watches them from a nearby hiding place. The boys challenge the tiger, singing and repeating the following song:

I occupy the tiger's den.

I have occupied the centre three times ten!

With a roar the infuriated tiger springs out of its hiding place, and a terrific battle ensues between the ferocious tiger and his assailants. There are no rules and both sides try to win by any

tactics they could think of. The fighting goes on till and finally the tiger loses. It teaches them to be brave, and daring to rescue and save their friends. At an early stage in their life, this imaginative game (which could be the envy of not a few script writers) trains and prepares them to be fit. It is also good for exercising their minds and bodies.

Hold the Mouse's Tail (Tira mei kaiah)

In this game, the boys tie a cloth round their waists. Each boy holds the cloth of the boy in front of him with both hands, forming a long queue, with eldest boy in front and the youngest bringing up the rear. They follow the leader, who quickens or slackens the space. They are as merry and happy as children could be, following the leader and repeating the following many time:

Hold the mouse's tail, ha ha!

Hold on to mouse's tail, ha ha!

Bite the last without fail,

Bite the little wagtail...

This game teaches the children to respect their elders. In every phase of their daily life, they are taught and trained to wait on those who are elder and not to take the lead nor the initiative – except when it was really necessary to do so. It also showed them how to follow happily in the footsteps of their elders. It is a good game and has a deep significant meaning.

Games Played by Both Girls and Boys

Swings

The children make swings and hang them on the branches of fruit trees near their homes or on the bough of trees on the outskirts of their village. Swinging affords them great pleasure. While swinging blissfully they sing this ditty:

*We make swings here, there and everywhere,
 I miss and follow joy where e'er'
 Swinging gives golden pleasure and joy,
 Give my love to that dear mithunherd boy;
 I'm not sincere, don't give him my love,
 Only pretend to give my love.*

Children at play swing back and forth like a pendulum; the song they sing and the way they sing it, are very befitting. They harmonize and go well together.

Bingte Sailo Thieves are Coming (Bingte sairawka)

In this game three, four or more children sit on their haunches side by side in a row. They put both hands behind them with finger interlaced forming a cup. One boy or girl paces back and forth behind them. This child has a pebble which he puts surreptitiously into one of the cupped hands. Another child sits in front of the children facing them. He has to guess where the pebble is. While playing this game they sing the following ancient song:

*Bingte, Sailo thieves,
 The Sailo thieves have come to rob;
 Open, shut, there's no need to sob.
 Hid them as a snail in her shell.
 My mithun –
 I have hid well, I have hid well,
 Where is it?*

It is not easy to understand or decipher the full meaning of this song because it was a coded message sung by children long, long ago. The song is worthy of note because it has some historical value.

As we have already mentioned at the beginning, the number of games played by Mizo children are legion. Even nowadays, in

northeast India, Burma (Myanmar) and Bangladesh, children who are the descendants of Mizo still play ancient games which have been passed on from generation to generation. The songs they sing while playing and also the actions, have a deep profound meaning attached to them. Many of them depict the personality and characteristics of Mizo life.

7. DOMESTIC ANIMALS

The Mizos have been breeding and rearing domesticated animals for ages. It is impossible to trace its beginnings, but we know from ancient legends and stories that domesticated animals played an important role in their daily life. Let us discuss them one by one in an orderly way:

The Dog (Ui)

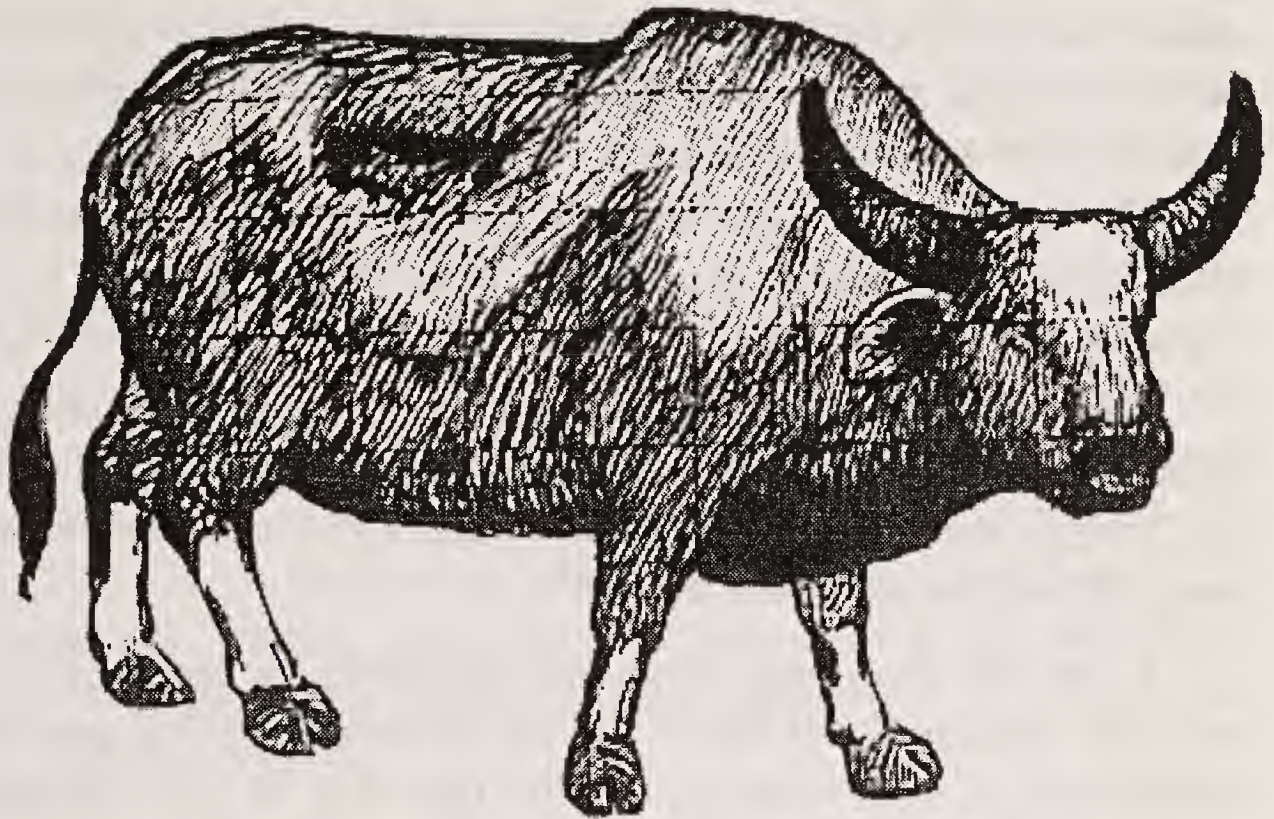
The dog has been a domestic animal of the Mizos since time immemorial. It was one of the first to be domesticated. We know that our ancestors used to kill dogs and offer them as a sacrifice to their god.

The Mizos have been eating dog meat and it was regarded as a delicacy. The dog was also useful as a companion to his master on a journey, or when he camped in the jungle or spent the nights in his jhoom hut. Last, but not least, the dog was useful in hunting and tracking down wounded wild animals.

Mithun (Sial)

To the Mizos, the mithun (gayal) was the most valuable domestic animal. It was brought by their ancestors to Mizoram when they migrated from the east. In the olden days the mithuns were used for barter. Wealth was measured according to the number of mithuns a man possessed. It was not milked like the cow and was never used as a beast of burden. Nevertheless, it was very important in many ways in the life of the Mizos in the days of yore.

The mithun was given as a wedding prize. When anyone committed a crime, the greatest fine he had to pay was a mithun. The price of a woman was a mithun, but when a man was



Mithun played a very important role in Mizo customs and traditions. Though it was never used as a beast of burden nor milked, wealth was always measured according to the number of mithuns a man possessed.

redeemed from his abductors, the price was a 'Darkhuang' (a large gong). It was regarded as a honour for a man to kill many mithuns for a 'Khuangchawi' public feast. Every Khuangchawi feast ended with the killing of a mithun. That was why the mithun was regarded as the most important domestic animal and it played a very important role in the customs, and traditions of the Mizo.

Chicken (Ar)

The chicken has been reared and bred by the Mizo since ages. There is a very ancient Mizo Myth depicting "Thlanrawkpa Khuang-chawi." Thlanrawkpa is regarded as one of the greatest and wealthiest person in Mizo mythology. Khuangchawi was a public feast given by a chief or a well-to-do person. Those who were wealthy enough to give feast were given the title of "Khuangchawi" or "Khungchawi-nu leh pa." It was like being honoured as a knight by the king and they were respected and

given priority among the Mizo. Thlanrawkpa was the first person among the Mizo to give a public feast and he invited people from far and wide to attend the feast. Animals and fowls and even the tadpole were served at the feat.

The chicken is mentioned in the myth of 'Thlanrawkpa khuangchawi,' hence it is assumed to be one of the first to be domesticated by the Mizo.

The chicken was useful to the Mizo in many ways. It was offered as a sacrifice to the spirits. When a bride was led away to a bridegroom's house, her parents had to give a chicken which was part and parcel of her dowry.

In the old days eggs were not consumed by adults. It was set aside entirely for children. Giving someone a boiled egg was regarded as a great honour. On the first day of the Chapchar Kut festival, in the month of March, before they burnt their jhooms, they used to cook all kinds of food and boiled many eggs. They would take all the food to the village square and enjoy a feast. After the feast, they would peel the boiled eggs and chase each other shoving the boiled eggs into each other's mouth! This was called "Chhawnghnawh." This was done every year and many boiled eggs were eaten during the Chhawnghnawh. Due to the above reasons, the egg was very important in Mizo life, culture and traditions.

The Pig (Vawk)

Like the chicken, pigs were bred by every family in a Mizo village. It could be regarded in some ways as part of a Mizo family. Pork was popular and could be eaten by almost everyone.

It was the first animal to be used as a sacrifice and was important in all their religious rites. The killing of a pig signified relationship and friendship. It was considered the highest honour one person bestowed on another.

To make their food delicious, Mizo added "sa-um" a kind of cheese – which was made from pork. The only cooking oil they possessed was pig's fat.

The Goat (Kel)

We believe that the goat was and has been a domestic animal of the Mizo since long age, because it was used often as a sacrifice in their religious rites. In the old days, they never milked the goats and women never ate its meat.

The Cow (Bawng)

In the old days, there were no cows in Mizoram. The cow was introduced in the year 1890, when the British entered Mizoram. It is said that the Indians called the cow 'bail' and the Mizo mistook the pronunciation for 'Bawng.' So it came to be known as 'Bawng.' In those days, when it was first introduced into Mizoram, only the menfolk ate its meat. It was never eaten by the women folk.

8. CUSTOMS OF ENTERTAINING GUESTS

From 1700 A.D., upto the time of British arrival in 1890, there were very few travellers in Mizoram. The reason for this was that the villages used to raid each other and were often at war. The various clans descended from Mizo never got on well with each other; and even those who were of the same clan did not agree with those in another village. Though villages were not far apart, there was no communication between them and they seldom visited each other.

There were no roads, mule tracks or even pathways between the villages. When they did have occasion to visit a village, they simply followed the ridges of hills. They used a Mizo 'Chem,' a chopper or machete. The sharp edge is leveled like the chisel cut down any branches or bushes that obstructed them. Regular pathways were never constructed.

They visited only the villages of the descendants of their own chiefs. Before setting out on a journey, they asked and received permission to look for a wife, to visit relations or to buy a domestic animal for breeding.

In those days, a traveller was dressed in a certain way, so that it would be easy for the people in the village they visited to know what class of society they belonged to.

A common ordinary person would wear a plain white cloth. And if he wore a turban, it would also be a plain white one. The long turban was woven at home. One end was wrapped around the head and the other end was tucked in quite firmly at the temple.

If he was a brave warrior or hunter who had killed a tiger, he would carry a leather satchel slung with a strap over one shoulder and across the chest. The cover would be made of a tiger's skin.

If he had killed a mithun (sechhun tawh) or had given a public feast he would be regarded as a well-to-do person; and he would wear a striped cloth and turban.

A chief would wear a black Mizos toga and a striped turban. He carried nothing and he would be followed and accompanied by ministers or elders. A number of brave, youngmen would be included in his retinue.

When a traveller reached his destination, he would approach the house where he intended to put up and ask politely, "Can you receive me as a guest?" Naturally, he would first make sure that there was no sacrificial ceremony going on in that particular house. When the owner of a house was in the process of offering a sacrifice to the spirits, no one was allowed to enter his house. He would cut off a fresh branch of a tree and hang the branch in front of his house as a sign to warn everybody that he was offering a sacrifice, and that, it was taboo to enter his house. Except when they were offering a sacrifice, Mizo never turned away a traveller or a stranger who asked permission to put up at their house. They were very hospitable. They would gladly entertain him and accommodate him as a guest.

Mizo suspected strangers and they did not talk to them politely. If the stranger was a youngman, they challenged him to wrestle. As a test of character and strength, wrestling was a good game. After wrestling, the contestants would become friendly.

The host family would regard it as their duty to tend to the guest with care. They prepared whatever food they had according to their means for him to partake of and on the morning of his departure they would prepare a packet of rice for his lunch to be eaten on the way, and also a packet of whatever curry they could afford. The rice and curry were wrapped in banana leaves.

Those who had killed mithuns, those who had given public feasts, those who held the title 'Chawngnu, chawngpa' and also famous warriors and hunters (knights) were usually put up in the house of an elder, advisor or minister of the chief, situated in the

central or more important part of the village in the neighbourhood of the chief's house and the village square.

In the olden days, Mizo chiefs used to compete in possessing wide areas of land. The more they had the more they were respected, admired and feared. Due to this, they used to invite and entice the 'Pasaltha' of other villages to move to their village.

They would regard their guest worthy of entertaining and do their utmost to please him according to their means. For them it was an important occasion. The guest was served the zu fang rice in a 'fenthliir' or 'finathliir,' a ladle or dipper made from a gourd.

When the guest felt refreshed and his thirst quenched; the host would serve a pot of 'zu-pui' (zupui is an intoxicating beer in contradiction to zu fang and rakzu – distilled liquor or spirits).

The host would also invite his neighbours who would come with their own pots of Zupui; and they would all sing and dance to the beats of a drum. The merry-making would go late into the night.

When the guests decide to retire to bed, the hostess would take out the best woven sheets or cloth, which had never been used before, from her 'thul' (a large basket with a close fitting conical lid used as a receptacle for yarn) new cloth and other precious possessions to prepare the bed for the guest on the 'Khum-ai', (the outer bed between the front wall and the fire place, making sure that it was warm and comfortable).

The next morning, they would kill a big fat hen or a large rooster for the morning meal, in honour of their guest. After partaking the morning meal, if the guest was to continue his journey, they would prepare a packet of rice and curry for his lunch, and wrapped it in hnahthial leaves (*Phrynium capitatum*). Then they would see him off politely.

A chief would only go on a journey to the villages of his own people. He would never visit the villages of other clan unless there was some important matter to deal with. Entertaining a

chief and his retinue of elders and youngmen was troublesome. It was always like a grand tour. He would put up in the house of the chief of that village or the house of a village elder. He would be the guest of only such a person.

When a chief arrived at his destination, no matter what time of the day it was, the host would place a pot of zupui before him. Then the host and his family would prepare a meal for him.

If he prolonged his stay, the village chief would arrange for one of his upa (elders) to kill a pig in honour of the guest. The upa who was appointed to do it would do so happily, as if his greatest wish was to please their guest.

The above is a general account of the ways in which the Mizo received and entertained guests. The procedures may be different in some villages, but in most cases the above account is the norm.

9. HOW 'TLAWMNGAIHNA' WAS INCULCATED IN THE YOUNG

The Mizo have a very high regard for "Tlawmngaihna," which literally means, 'unwillingness to be defeated or be beaten.' To the Mizo mind, the word 'Tlawmngaihna' brings forth the essence of beauty. The following is quoted from the Second Chapter of this book: "As an incentive and encouragement and to increase the number of courageous and chivalrous men among his subjects, the chief and his upa (elders) devised the custom of the 'Big Cup' (No pui). The person to be honoured was the first to drink 'zu' from this cup on the first night of the 'Chawngchen' festival which lasted three days. It was wise and praiseworthy of our ancestors and chief to devise this Award.

We will now see how Tlawmngaihna was instilled into the young Mizo.

When Foraging in the Jungle

Mizo children would forage in the jungle near their village to pluck edible wild fruits. Sometimes they would go to a stream to catch crabs or fish. Each boy would have his own bag or container to carry the fruit or crabs or fish he caught; but when it was time to go home, they would put all they caught in one big pile and divide it equally.

After dividing it into equal portions, the youngest among them was allowed to choose his share first while the eldest took the last remaining portion. Sometimes, when the foraging was not successful and the amount they procured was too little to be divided among themselves, they would give all they procured to the youngest.

On their way home, they would let the youngest take the

lead, saying, “If a little child followed in the rear, a chameleon spits on him!” The eldest would bring up the rear and they would walk home slowly according to the pace of the youngest and weakest who was in the lead.

At Meals

On the other hand, when they sat down to have a meal, a child would respect his elders. He would wait for a sign from his elders before he took the first mouthful and started eating. When having a meal in the jungle or at a feast, a child would never be the first to take a handful of rice and put it in his mouth. A child who ate heartily before his elders started eating was regarded as the most shameful thing. According to Mizo etiquette and propriety, an elder would put food before a child and entice him by saying, “Eat the meat.” Even in the song composed to teach, instill and inculcate Tlawmngaihna in the children, the following words are included:

*At a feast when they start to eat,
One should not take the first mouthful;
Before their elders start to eat,
Children ne'er take the first mouthful.*

Cutting the Jhooms

There were many ways in which the Mizo earned their living, and among the different kinds of work they did, cutting the jhooms was the most strenuous and the most tiresome. They could also be seriously injured as it was dangerous and hazardous. The old people used to say, “A man cutting a jhoom and a woman in travail are both riding on a bier.” When the jhooms were not close to the village, they had to camp in the jungle and spend the nights there. For youngsters it was a convenient time to learn the Mizo way of life: Mizo altruism, Tlawmngaihna, assiduousness, diligence and industry; behaviour, courtesy, obedience and respect for elders. It was the most important time for them to be trained, to acquire those desirable traits which added up and amounted to Tlawmngaihna – the Mizos personality.

During the cutting of the jhooms, the campers would take with them a large supply of rice, chillies (capsicum), smoked or dried mustard leaves, yam, be-te (an edible bean) and bedding. The owners of jhooms would choose a central spot for their camp, where there was a water hole or a spring. Sometimes 20 to 30 owners camped together.

They would construct a large rough temporary hut. To keep themselves warm, they would light a big camp fire in the centre of the hut. They made their beds and slept round the camp fire.

Each member of the camp would do his best to bring something to prepare the food. Some would be successful in setting traps and bring a pheasant or a jungle fowl. Others would bring back the flowers and fruit buds of the shoots of the cane or some crabs. Those who brought back such things to add to their diet were praised and honoured, especially those who returned with a pheasant or a jungle fowl. When they went to work the next morning, the choicest meat of the fowl was put in the packet of rice for their lunch.

After working the whole day, they returned and gathered together again in the camp. They did their chores briskly: Some went to fetch firewood; while others cooked the rice, curry and soup. Each and everyone was busy in his own task. However, by watching and following the example of those who were older and more experienced, the youth were able to learn the art of cooking.

The menfolk who had been working strenuously the whole day, lay down on the floor on their stomachs, with their chins and elbows on the beddings. They were tired and exhausted. They lay down round the camp fire and watched those who were cooking and preparing dinner. When the youth had finished cooking, they ladled a pile of cooked rice from the rice pots into banana leaves spread out on the floor of the hut. They made a crater in the centre of the pile of rice; and poured the curry into the hole. Then they would announce, "Dinner is ready – come and get it." The adults and youngmen would get up immediately and sit on

their haunches round the meal that had been prepared. After the meal, the menfolk would gargle and rinse and wash their mouth. Then they would lie on their stomachs again.

Even if the food prepared was sometimes not quite delicious, or tasty, the grown ups would never grumble or criticize. Even if the rice smelled burnt or was burnt black, they ate it heartily as if it was delicious. If a grown up grumbled about the food and criticized the cooking, he was regarded as blameworthy, culpable or reprehensible.

After the dinner, the youngsters washed the cooking utensils, and swept the floor of the hut. Some of them would collect raw rice to prepare the morning meal. Then they would light a torch and go down to the water-hole to fetch water for cooking the morning meal. Sometimes the water took a long time to seep out of the ground, and they had to wait late into the night at the water hole before they could scoop out enough water. Those who were more altruistic than the others slept for a short while before waking up to cook and prepare the first meal of the day.

The next morning they woke up very early. They regarded it as shameful to wake up after their friends had lit the fire in the hearth. Everyone tried to be the first to get up and light the fire. They worked briskly to prepare the morning meal so that they would be able to eat it at dawn or daybreak.

When they camped together in the jungle to cut their jhooms, the campers were like one big family. They shared whatever they had to eat and drink. If a person injured himself, and someone had to take him home, both of them would never worry about their unfinished work. Their fellow campers continued and finished the work for them. Those who helped them did so without expecting to be repaid for their kindness.

After the cutting of the Jhooms was finished everybody returned to his village where they were welcomed by their loved ones. The next morning they would carry the pots of beer, they had prepared before going to the jungle for camping, to the house of the oldest camper or to a convenient house. There they would

gather together at about 9 a.m. to drink “Hah zu” (fermented beer). Hah zu is also called “Thi hrin zu” (zu that increases blood). The youngsters siphoned out the zu from the pots and prepared it for drinking. When they had siphoned the zu they would fill a big cup and announce to the elders that they had finished the preparations.

While the youth were preparing the “Hah zu,” the grown-up jokingly discussed about at the camp. After the preparations they started drinking together. The elders remembered the youngsters who had been industrious; those who were the first to get up in the morning to gather firewood, to fetch water and do the culinary work. It was time for them to honour the youth for their labour, their good behaviour and obedience towards their elders.

Then the youth would say, “Let this or that upa drink in my stead.” The other elders would “tawk” (offer it to another person), but they would decline the offer and “leh” it, that is – name another elder to drink in their stead. In this way, all the elders would take a mouthful of zu from the big cup, and every youth declined and named someone else to be honoured. After that, the owner of the zu pots would be served in big cups and they would “tawk” (offered it to any youth they favoured and wished to honour), but the youth would “leh” (name someone else to be honoured), and so on. If they came upon someone who was already holding a big cup of zu, they would say, “E, ka khawh e,” which means “Drink from my big cup, I’ll drink from yours,” and they would exchange cups. Their friends and neighbours who had been invited to attend the party would be served with “Hah zu” in smaller cups. These cups were ordinary, community cups known as “Hai lawn no” or “no-leng.” They would drink happily together, and the intoxicating fermented beer would be served to any and everyone without any distinction whatsoever.

It was an important step in training and inculcating Mizo Tlawmngaihna in the youth.

10. VALUABLE POSSESSIONS

To our ancestors the words 'Sum' or 'Sum leh pai' actually meant assets, which could be handed down from father to son or inherited. Nowadays, Mizo regard the word 'sum' as money; that is 'Tangka' or 'Pawisa.' Tangka may be a Sanskrit word, or it may have had its origin from the Burmese word 'Ding-ga.' In the same way, the word 'Pawisa' may be a mispronunciation of the Hindi word 'Paise', the Burmese word 'Paih-san' or the English word 'Pice.'

Let us take a brief view, one by one, of the valuable possessions of our forefathers:

Dar (Brass Gongs)

Among the valuable possessions of the Mizo, the most prominent one was the gong. It was owned and possessed only by the well to do and the rich. Those who owned gongs were proud of its possession and treasured them. To advertise and display their possession, many of them used 'Dar' as a prefix when they named their children. It is used frequently even nowadays. There are different kinds of gongs.

Darkhuang (Big Gong)

The big gongs were owned by well to do Mizo who had settled in the east in the Kale-Kabaw valley. When they migrated to the west across the Tiau river, they took their gongs with them. On important occasions they would beat the big gongs incessantly, producing a deep melodious sound which reverberated through the air. Sometimes they would also use other smaller gongs of different sizes to harmonize with the Darkhuang. When tigers appeared near the village, youngmen and boys would go around

and round the village beating Darkhuangs and causing a din which drove the wild beasts away.

The Mizo treasured and esteemed the Darkhuang. It could even be said that they esteemed it much more than their mithuns. Among the Darkhuangs of our ancestors, the “Chawngvungi Dar” is regarded as one of the most famous.

(b) Darbu

The Darbu is a set of three gongs of different size. Like a simple zylophone, by striking the gongs one after the other, the sounds produce tunes to which words were composed for ‘Gong songs’ such as:

*The Liando brothers, brothers,
What gongs you’re beating, beating?
We’re not beating any gongs,
Just Liando’s little tin can, tin can.*

Besides the above, there are other ancient gong songs. Among the different kinds of Mizo gongs, the Darbu set of three gongs is one of the most prominent. The well known ones are the Liando dar, the Kalzang dar, the Tuaichawng dar and the Selbuang dar.

(c) The Darmang

Though there are Darmangs of different sizes, it is not possible to play a tune on them. The Darmang was used to harmonize with the Darkhuang and a small drum. Like the Darkhuang, the Darmang was used often to frighten and drive away tigers which came near the village. There are no famous Darmangs worth mentioning.

The Guns (Si-lai)

It is difficult to trace when and how the Mizo started owning guns; but one thing is certain the guns were not invented or made by them. It is a foreign product. It is believed

that they first possessed guns when they settled east of the river Tiau. The gun was mentioned for the very first time in the history of the Mizo when they were living on the western slopes of the Lentlang mountain range. At that time, the Kawlni sub-clan who were the descendents of Mizo were living in the village Suaipui and Saihmun. One day, while they were singing and dancing, the Lai (or Pawi) clan unexpectedly raided and attacked the village. The Kawlnis were caught unawares and many were killed and beheaded. The following ancient song was composed after the raid.

Out of the blue Pawis raided,
Our Kawlni sub-clan,
My Suaipui village and square were unpleasant.
My Suaipui village and square were unpleasant,
Our headless dead propped in a row in the shade,
They took many heads, clothes and Guns in the raid.

We find the Gun mentioned in this song. Among the ancient songs of the Mizo, the word 'silai' (gun) was mentioned for the very first time in this song. The incident mentioned in the above song took place between the years 1450 to 1500 A.D. The guns mentioned in this song were olden days flintlock guns known to the Mizo as 'Aw-lan si-lai.' Since that time, guns were regarded by the Mizo as valuable possessions, and they were very useful in battles and during the wars.

Necklace (Thi)

In the ancient life of the Mizo, the necklace played an important role. It was used as an ornament to enhance their beauty. Necklaces were treasured and prized by those who possessed them. Those who owned valuable necklaces became famous.

There were different kinds of necklaces of which two are mentioned below.

Amber necklace (Thi-hna)

Amber is a precious stone which comes from the amber mines in Burma (Myanmar). Amber is the cheapest among the semi-precious stones of Burma, but the Mizo set a high price on it and regarded it as a valuable possession. The price of an amber bead depended on its worth and beauty.

At first, amber necklaces were worn by men only. If there were enough beads on a string to fit round the neck it was sufficient. Some men wore one bead on a string as a necklace. That is why, in Mizo literature we have the expression, “Thi beh lo thu” (words without a bead), i.e. Meaningless or pointless words. Later on, amber necklaces were worn by women; and the longer the string of beads, the more beautiful it was to them. As the number of beads increased, the price of the necklace also increased.

Semi-precious ruby (Thi-val)

The Thi-val is also from the ruby mines of Burma. It is also the cheapest among the semi-precious gems. If there were enough beads on a string to hang round the neck, it was called ‘hruikhat’ (one string of beads). If the beads were of a good quality, the Thi-val necklace was worth the price of a young mithun bull or a mithun heifer. The Thi-val necklace was regarded as a valuable possession and was often given and accepted as the price of a bride. The Thi-val and the thi-fen, which was made up of long beads and hung in bunches round the neck, were worn from the beginning by women.

In the olden days, ordinary folks could not afford to buy or possess them. A high priced Thi-val and Thi-fen necklace was regarded as a valuable possessions; and sometimes, those who owned them dared not wear or dangle them in the streets or in public.

Mithun or Gayal (Sial)

The mithun was the main valuable possession of the Mizo.

A man was considered rich according to the number of mithuns he bred or possessed. Though the mithun was vulnerable to disease and death, those who were able to breed many never were looked down upon.

Big Brass Pot (Darbel)

Though pots, pans and utensils were not worth inheriting, big brass pots were regarded as valuable possessions. During festivals when mithuns were killed and the meat had to be boiled, the big brass pots were very useful and indispensable. Our Mizo ancestors appreciated, valued, prized and treasured their big brass pots. At that time it was difficult for ordinary folks to buy or obtain them. Those who owned brass pots often gained distinction and fame.

Long ago, our ancestors regarded Brass, Gongs, Necklaces, Guns, Mithuns and Big Brass Pots as valuable possessions which they handed down to their offsprings. The valuable possessions were used in lieu of money.

Gradually, the daily life of the Mizo developed and progressed. Eventually, they realized that they could not live the usual secluded life like their ancestors. Besides, trade and business, higher education, government employment and Christianity came on the scene. Moreover, government currency – the rupee – made its appearance; and bank accounts, land and property and modern inventions took the place of the valuable possessions of our ancestors; and most of the old valuable possessions are now regarded as obsolete oddities and curios fit for museums only.

11. FESTIVALS

The Mizo have three kinds of festivals. The origin of these festivals are not known and cannot be traced. From the history of the Mizo and the legends of our ancestors, it is known that they celebrated these festivals between the years 1450 to 1700 A.D. when they had settled in the area between the Run and the Tiau rivers. Let us take a general view of these festivals.

Chapchar Kut

This 'Kut' or festival was celebrated annually after they had cut their jhooms and were free from toil and hard labour. Every year it was celebrated at the end of March or the beginning of April. Among the three festivals, it was the most popular and lasted the longest.

Origin

According to legends, it is said that when the Mizo who were living in the Chin State set out on a hunting trip after cutting the jhooms, unfortunately, the hunt was not successful and they returned empty handed. They were ashamed and embarrassed. They had no desire to drink 'Hah zu' (intoxicating fermented beer) the following day.

Where upon, their leader exclaimed. "Oh, my young brothers, don't be ashamed. We'll shoot large animals and those with long horns and antlers. Tomorrow, we must make merry and drink 'hah zu.' I'll contribute a big pot of zu and each of you will contribute a small pot of zu. We shall drink and be happy; we shall celebrate and have a rollicking time together." In that way, he was able to comfort the youngmen who were ashamed and embarrassed.

The next day they returned home and according to their custom, they drank 'hah zu' together. They were surprised to find that their joy exceeded that of earlier years. In the evening, they all came out of the house and began dancing and singing on the village square. The joyous sound of singing and dancing, the sound of the drum and the clapping sound of mithun horns, made the people of the village to participate in the merry making. The youngmen and maidens formed a circle – male and female consecutively. Swaying from side to side, they moved slowly and rhythmically around the drummer and the man who clapped the mithun horn together. At the same time he cued and prompted the singing.

Unwittingly they had invented the 'Chai lam' (a popular Mizo folk dance). When the chief of the village saw his subjects singing and dancing happily, he was overjoyed. Carrying a big pot of rice beer, he went to the village square and joined his subjects.

The next-year, at the same time, after they had cut their jhooms, they drank zu together and sang and swayed and danced again to the sounds of the drum and the mithun horns. Even the chief was enthusiastic and killed mithun for a feast. Since then every year at the same time, invariably and regularly, this festive occasion was held. And so, the "Chapchar Kut" came into being.

Celebration

When the Chapchar Kut was drawing near, beer was fermented in every home in the village in advance. Some of the villagers went hunting, while others set traps in the jungle, using various ways and means, to obtain meat for the festival. On the first day of the Chapchar Kut, those who could afford killed a pig for the feast. That is why the first day of the Chapchar Kut came to be known as 'Lusei vawk talh ni' (the day the Lushai clan butchered pigs). On the second day, other clans would kill animals and consum them.

On the first day of the festival, the elders and menfolk drank zu by sucking it though a tube the whole day long. The women

folk, the young ladies and the youngmen also drank beer on the first day; but not so much as to become inebriated. In the evening, on the first day of the Kut, mothers followed by their children, would go to the entrance of the village where there was a platform made of stones erected in memory of the dead. There they would feast on rice, meat and boiled eggs. When they were satiated the children would take a handful of the leftovers especially boiled eggs and chase each other around cramming their friends mouths with eggs. It was a festive occasion which everybody looked forward to every year. This occasion of cramming of stuffing eggs into each other mouths is known to the Mizo as “Chhawng-hnawh.”

In the evening the people would gather together on the village square in front of the chief's house. They would form a circle and the men would place their arms over the shoulders of the women, and the women would put their arms round the waists of the men, and sway rhythmically. To accompany the singing, there was a drummer and another individual who beat mithun horn together. Some of those among them would prompt and cue the signing:

*Preparing feast on a rainy day,
The jhooms will yet be burnt any way.
The jhooms will yet be burnt any way,
Does not the moon shine as bright as day.*

Sometimes they would sing the following couplet:

*When the wind blows, all the trees start swaying,
When drums sound, youngmen commence saying.*

The children would serve zu to those who were singing and dancing the Chai dance. On the first day of the Chapchar Kut, it was compulsory for the damsels and youngmen to sing and dance all through the night. If they did not keep up the whole night, they were not allowed to continue singing and dancing on the following nights.

The young ladies would wear their best attire. They would

also wear 'Va-ki-ria' (headdress decorated with parrot's feathers, golden beetle's wings and seed etc.) and necklaces. The youngmen would also wear their best clothes. Chapchar Kut was the happiest occasion in the life of the Mizo. That is why our old folks described it as, "Holding a dance in celebration of the taking of our own heads." Generally the Chapchar Kut lasted from three to seven days.

The longest celebration of Chapchar Kut known in the history of the Mizo, after the great migration of the Mizo into Mizoram in the year 1700 A.D., were held in the villages of Chawngtui and Ruallung. They were so engrossed in their pleasure that they did not know when to stop. They went on singing, dancing and having a good time from the middle of March to the end of October! It was only when parrots flew into their village with ears of paddy, taken from the jhooms of neighbouring villages, in their beaks that they came to their senses and realized their error. It was too late for them to have jhooms for that year. It is said that this resulted in the breaking up and dispersal of the village.

Our ancestors were strict regarding the observance of Chapchar Kut. During the festival, husbands and wives were not allowed to quarrel. Wives were not allowed to run away to their parents house and no one was allowed to cause anger. In their opinion, everybody should enjoy the festival happily together.

Mim Kut

"Mim" is a nut known as "Job's tears." Mim Kut was a festival which was celebrated at the end of August or in the beginning of September. The village chief and his elders fixed the date for celebrating it. In most cases, it was held when the maize plants had matured. It was regarded as a festival in honour of the dead.

Origin

Long ago, there lived an adorable, beautiful young lady name Tlingi. At that time, there was a handsome youngman named

Ngama. Tlingi and Ngama loved each other very much. They got married and lived blissfully in a house that Ngama built.

Alas! Unfortunately, death claimed Tlingi. Ngama could not contain his grief. His thoughts were filled with memories of his beloved wife Tlingi. He mourned and wept every day for hours. One day he cried himself to death and soon found himself in the abode of the dead. There he met Tlingi. She was so skinny that his heart was filled with compassion and pity. He asked her the reason for her being so haggard and undernourished and she said, "Food is extremely scarce in the land of the dead. That is why I'm so thin. Go home and get some vegetables from our jhoom for me."

Ngama regained consciousness and immediately went to his fields and collected various vegetables. As he stood in front of his house, his heart was filled with tenderness and longing for his dear wife Tlingi who was starving in the land of the dead. His eyes were brimming with tears and his vision became blurred. When he pushed aside the bamboo sliding door and entered his house, he tripped accidentally and fell face down on the floor. The vegetables fell off his basket and came to rest at the place where Mizo kept their water for drinking and cooking purposes. The water was stored in large bamboo tubes which were placed against the wall. Ngama cried out pathetically from the bottom of his heart, "There you are Tlingi eat as much as you can!"

His cry of anguish made his tears flow again. He sobbed bitterly and cried himself to death. For the second time, he found himself in the land of the dead; and when he met Tlingi she was strong and healthy. When he asked her how she had gained weight, she replied, "I ate the vegetables which you offered me and I'm now fat."

Ngama regained consciousness and returned to the land of the living. Every year on the same day he offered vegetables to his dear beloved Tlingi. He would put the vegetables as an offering near the bamboo tubes which contained water for the household. Noticing this peculiar habit observed by Ngama, his neighbours

asked him about it. He explained his experiences in the land of the dead. Fearing that their relatives and friends were starving in the land of dead, other families also offered food on the same day every year. This way, “Mitthi thlai-chhiah” (offering vegetables to the dead) and “Mim Kut” (Job’s tear festival) came into being and were observed every year.

Celebration

Before the day of the festival, zu was fermented in every house. They also transported various kinds of vegetables from their jhooms to their homes in advance. On the day of the festival, nobody went to work. They all stayed at home and regarded it as a day of rest. The men and women folks drank zu the whole day. They offered the vegetables to their demised relatives. They pounded glutinous rice, wrapped it in plantain leaves and made Mizo bread or dumplings. Some packets of dumplings were given to their children and some were offered to the dead.

They believed that during the Mim Kut, the spirits of the departed came home to eat the vegetables and dumplings. Sentiments and longings for their dead relatives were enhanced during the festival and more so for those who had recently lost their loved ones. In great sorrow, grief and longing, they would sing songs of lamentation to the dead, such as the following:

*The banyan lost its branch, its top is black and thin,
And I have lost my mate, the bed is not slept in.*

*Lurhpui is the highest mount on earth it is said,
From its peak will I see the abode of the dead?*

The Mizo are a pensive tribe. They are prone to thoughts and feelings of love, tenderness, sentiment, longing and emotion. Pondering and musing over the past during the Mim Kut, they would compose and sing many songs. Because it was a period of lamentation and longing for the dead, Mim Kut was also called “Tah Kut,” which means the “Lamentation Festival.”

Mim Kut festival was observed for one day only. The following day they would observe another day of rest. On the

third day they would take the vegetables they had offered to the dead and cook and eat it themselves. They believed that the spirits of the dead dispersed and returned to the land of the dead; and that it was not necessary to offer them food any more. That is why the month of August in which the Mim Kut is observed is known to the Mizo as ‘the month in which the dead disperse’ (Thi tin thla).

Pawl Kut

After harvesting the paddy at the end of the month of December, the Mizo used to celebrate the Pawl Kut. Every family had a large amount of paddy, cereals, root crops. Pawl Kut was regarded as a festival allotted to the children.

Origin

When our ancestors had settled in the present Chin State during the years 1450 to 1700 A.D., they suffered “Thingpui tam” famine. The famine lasted three long years. In the fourth year the harvest was successful. Their barns were full and they had a good supply of cereals and root crops. The village chief made the following suggestion to the village elders: “Here, after suffering a terrible famine for three years, we now have enough food to fill our stomachs. To celebrate this occasion let each and every family kill a chicken, and let’s all eat a dinner with meat on the same night.” All the elders agreed to his proposal.

To let all the people in the village know about this, the village crier announced it in the streets; and they all prepared and partook the dinner with meat. The next year, at the same time after the harvest, they had the dinner with meat again. As some were not satisfied with chicken only, pork was also included. And so, this feast was observed every year, and Pawl Kut – the Harvest Festival of the Mizo – became an established part of the customs and traditions of the Mizo.

Celebration

When the festival was drawing near, every family prepared

zu in advance. To obtain meat for the Pawl Kut, the brave men of the village went to the jungle for hunting. Others set 'Sah-dal' and 'Be-ai' noose traps with bait in the jungle to catch jungle fowl, pheasants and partridges. Mothers stored eggs for the occasion. Everybody was determined to eat meat on the day of the festival. If they did not shoot big game or catch any birds, they would kill a chicken for the feast. Many people killed pigs for the Pawl Kut.

Two days before the feast, the pre-eminent, exclusive Luseis would kill their pigs and offer them to the spirit. The next day the people of other clans and sub-clans would follow suit. Nobody could kill a "Vawkpa sut-nghak" (a pig set aside for a religious purpose) on their own. The Sadawt (village priest) went to the houses where the ceremonies were to be performed. They would give him zu, and he would utter incantations. The pig was killed only after the priest had recited his incantation or spell.

After they had killed their pigs and offered them to the spirits in an orderly way, the day of the festival arrived, and they would celebrate the Pawl Kut festival. During the Pawl Kut all the children wore their best clothes. They also wore necklaces. Those who did not possess necklaces borrowed them. Like the Chapchar Kut, they would go to entrance of the village where there was a platform of large stones erected in memory of the dead. There they would enjoy a sumptuous feast and practice the custom of "Chhawng-hnawh," chasing each other with leftovers in hands and shoving boiled eggs into each other's mouths. Mizo love children. They teach and train them to be good citizens. They never neglect them. During the Pawl Kut festival, the men folk drank zu the whole day. The maidens and youngmen also enjoyed themselves and had rollicking time.

The duration of the pawl Kut depended on the amount of zu they possessed. When the harvest of paddy was enough to make a normal amount of zu, the Pawl Kut lasted only one day. Sometimes, when the harvest was plenteous and abundant, the festival lasted one whole week.

MIZO DANCES

Mizo have various kinds of dances. We will discuss some of the popular ones and those which are still in use.

Khual-Iam

‘Khual-Iam’ means ‘Stranger’s dance.’ Among the folk dances of Mizo, it is one of the oldest and most ancient. Its origin is lost in antiquity and cannot be traced. It is also called the ‘Thingdim’ dance. After completing all preparations for the dance, an odd number of slices of ginger were skewered on a pointed, flexible, pliant stick. Two tail feathers of cock were inserted on the topmost slice of ginger. This stick of ginger had to be stuck in the bamboo partition (bang-lai) in the house of the ‘Pu’ of the man who was going to give a public feast (Khuang-chawi). The person chosen to do this had to keep a vow of silence. He was not allowed to speak or utter a word from the time he left his house till he had stuck in the ginger head dress on the banglai (partition) of the ‘Pu’ and returned home again. The Khuangchawi selected a person who was trustworthy and would never do him any harm.

After the ginger had been stuck in on the bamboo partition, the ‘Pu’ (wife’s brother, father or maternal uncle) who was going to give the public feast would know that he intended to hold a Khuangchawi. He would select a group of men or youngmen to do the ‘Thingdim’ or ‘Khual-Iam’ dance, and they would practice the dance every night. The villagers would enjoy watching them while they practiced.

On the day of the Khuangchawi public feast, the ‘Pu’ who was to give the feast and his group would dance the Khual-Iam or Thingdim dance they had practiced. They would dance along the streets and gradually approach the house of the Khuangchawi to

stick in the ginger head dress on the ‘banglai’ of the man who was going to give the public feast. With the exception of the leader, all the dancers wore caps. They held the top corners of the cap and moved forward one behind the other, doing the steps of the Khuallam/Thingdim dance. The leader who had no cap would sing the following song:

Pay us a mithun for dancing.

Offer us striped cloth for singing.

The wife of the person who was to give the public feast would crumple and compress cloth and throw it at him. In front of the house of the Khuangchawi the dancers moved gradually in a wide circle. At the tail end of the line of dancers there would be a joker or clown who made glaring mistakes and danced in a way that was inconsistent with the other dancers. The villagers, who had hurried out to watch the procession and the dancing, enjoyed watching the antics of the clown and laughed uproariously.

The ‘Thingthiah’ and the ‘Thigdim/Khuallam’ dances were performed not only by a group from another village but also by a group arranged by a ‘Pu’ living in the same village where the Khuangchawi feast was to be held. In the olden days, women did not participate in the ‘Khuallam’ dance. The participation of women came much later.

‘Thing’ is an abbreviated form of ‘Sawh-thing,’ meaning ginger. In the Khuallam there are various intricate steps. In the Mizo language, the names of the steps are as follows: Kal tluang, Kal thelh, Arpui chawm thai, Vasir len, Khupsuk, Sailawinu kal, Tuipui khang tan, Ar khaw thim dai ang, Kawlngo len.

First the dance was called ‘Thingdim’ in accordance with its origin, but later on the name was changed to ‘Khuallam.’ Some say that it happened in this way: Once upon a time, a man decided to give a public feast ‘Khuangchawi.’ His ‘Pu’ who was living in another village, gathered together a group and went with them to stick in the gingers on the partition in the house of his son-in-law or brother-in-law, who was going to hold a Khuangchawi.

At the entrance of the village the strangers took their

appointed positions, beat a gong and a drum, and dancing in procession, they entered the village. The villagers hurried out to watch the unusual spectacle and exclaimed, "How remarkable, strangers are dancing in our village!" And from that time onwards, the 'Thingdim' dance came to be known as 'Khuallam' (Strangers dance).

Che-raw

The 'che-raw' is performed as a folk dance in the Philippines. To the Philipinos it is known as 'Tinikaling.'

It is difficult to trace the origin of the che-raw performance among the Mizo. It was probably performed by our ancestors when they had settled east of the river Tiau. Some Mizo clans used to dance the che-raw to celebrate a harvest of 100 loads of paddy. It is said that some of Mizo clan or sub-clan also danced the che-raw in the house of the bereaved.

Children used to perform 'che-raw kan' for enjoyment when they played games in the moonlight (Pawnto). As years rolled by the che-raw became more and more popular and now it is the most prominent folk dance of the Mizo.

The che-raw is as reckless, intricate, dangerous and hazardous as the Scottish sword dance. It is tiring and the dancers have to be careful. The motions and movements of the dancers are so graceful that foreigners regard the che-raw as the most thrilling, exciting and interesting among the Mizo dances.

Chai-lam

The chailam was performed by our ancestors only during the Chapchar Kut. There is a firm relationship between the chailam and the Chapchar Kut. We do not know exactly when our ancestors started the practice and performance of this ancient folk dance; but it seems they had already got into the habit of doing the chai dance, when they were living between the Run and Tiau rivers during the years 1300 to 1700 A.D. The chai

songs when performing the chai dance are all ancient Mizo songs. More over, verses were added continuously to the ready made tunes composed by famous Mizo poets. The tunes still bear the names of the composers and the most prominent among them are as follows: Pi Hmuaki zai, Nilen zai, Lera zai, Mangkhaia zai, Lalvunga zai, Zopui zai (or Lallula zai), Darpuui zai, Sirvate zai and Aikhiangi zai.

Generally the dance is performed as follows: The men put their arms round the shoulders of the women, and the women put their arms round the men's waist from behind and form a circle. Inside the circle there is a drummer and another man who beats mithun horn together. The drummer beats his drum and commences the singing. The man who beats the mithun horn together cues the singing.

The drummer starts the beating of the drum and on the fourth stroke they start singing. Standing and singing, the dancers begin to sway. When the leader of the dancers decided it was time to do so, he would say, "Now then, let's start stepping and dancing," and so, they begin dancing the chailam. When doing the chai dance, there are four kinds of steps. From village to village there are different versions and different ways in which it is performed.

Tlang-lam

In 1894, Christianity entered Mizoram and in the same year, the Missionaries gave the Mizo alphabet 'A Aw B.' Many became Christians and the Mizo way of life, Mizo customs, culture and traditions were neglected and distained by some. About thirteen or fourteen years later, "Puma zai" came upon the scene. It turned the clock back for the Mizo and there was great rejoicing; so much that in many villages, domestic animals were killed and 'sa aih' ceremonies of rejoicing were performed over this popular song. It is said that the man who composed the "Puma zai" set the ball rolling for the great revival of old traditions.

The Puma zai consisted of two lines to each version. As all good things come to an end, the Puma zai also had its hey day

and gradually declined. It was replaced by the “Tlang-lam zai” which consisted of three lines to a verse. The Puma zai reinforced conservatism. The ‘Tlanglam zai’ went a step further and many became reactionaries (extreme conservatives).

According to its name, the Tlanglam dance was a community or social dance. In the height of its popularity, the Tlanglam dance spread like a forest fire all over Mizoram.

Chheih-lam

The word ‘chheih-lem’ is not an ancient or archaic word. Between the years 1907-1908 the Puma zai made its appearance. Using the Puma zai, they used to dance the Tlang-lam. The chheih-lam is a branch of the Tlanglam dance.

Long after the Tlang-lam had become popular and was the craze of many in the whole of Mizoram, the tune, mode, manner, style and metre were changed slightly, and the result was the chheih song and chheih dance. The dancer would repeat the words ‘chheih, chheih, chheih’ or ‘chheih khan.’ And so, the Tlanglam song became the Chheih song and the Tlanglam dance became the chheih dance.

The chheih-lam had no fixed steps. The way it was performed depended on the gumption and inventive abilities of the dancer. Generally, the chheih song consisted of three lines to a verse. The singers stressed or emphasized the second or middle line; and the movements of the dancer was also accentuated on the middle line.

So-la-kia/Sar-lam-kai

The Lai (Pawi) clan call this dance the ‘Sar-lam-kai.’ On the other hand it is known to the Lusei clan as ‘Ral-lu-lam,’ which means ‘dancing to celebrate the taking of an enemy’s head.’ The Mara clan call it the ‘So-la-kia’ dance. Though there are slight differences in the way they perform it, it signifies that the Lai, Lusei and Mara people are of the same tribe and origin; and that they are the progeny of the same ancestor.

Long ago, our ancestors were always at war. When they brought back the heads of their enemies, they were bound to kill their domestic animal and perform a 'Ral lu aih' ceremony over the heads they brought back. They believed that if they did not hold these ceremonies, the spirit of the dead enemy could not be controlled.

The ceremony and the performance of the 'Ral lu aih' lasted five days. The first two days were spent in singing; and consumption of meat and rice beer. The Mizo expression is 'zu leh sa chen,' which means reveling in indolent pleasure and enjoyment of alcohol and meat. On the third day, a pig was killed and the man who brought the head back smeared his whole body with the blood of the pig. He was not allowed to wash or bathe till the fourth or fifth day of the ceremony. During those days, he was also forbidden to sleep with or near any female. If he did so, they believed that the spirit of his dead foe would be offended; and would exclaim, "He prefers a women instead of me!" and would cause the man, who killed him, to become disabled and infirm so that he would never be able to kill an enemy again.

Those who were successful in raids and brought home the heads of their enemies and performed the 'Ral lu aih' Ral lu lam' ceremony were highly regarded by the people. The chief and village elders also granted them privileges.

The solakia dance was conducted, guided and led mostly by the drum and the cymbal. The cymbal gave the signals to change the steps and actions during the dance; and the duration of the dance. In the Solakia/Sarlamkai dance the men and women are positioned alternately.

Chawng-lai-zawn

This is a dance of the Lai (Pawi) clan who are the descendants of Mizo. The Zahau and the Halkha also perform this dance. The Zahau sub-clan do the Chawnglaizawn dance when they bury their dead whereas Halkha sub-clan do it for amusement, enjoyment and pleasure.

The dance is conducted and guided by the drummer. When there are many dancers, they dance in four rows or lines; but when a few participants take part in the dance, it is performed in two rows. One row consisting entirely of men, queue up one behind the other. On the left hand side of the men, the women also form a queue. The dancers tie the ends of a cloth under their armpits and knot the corners on the chests. Holding the other two corners in their hands, they lift their arms above their heads and dance the Chawnglaizawn dance.

The Chawnglaizawn dance performed by the dancers is as graceful as a ballerina. The song they sang was as follows:

*During, during the Chawnglaizawn,
During the Chawng festival,
I didn't stamp Thlanrawn-
Pawi's mithun horn, mithun horn;
Nor did I stamp Thankual's circumcised brawny thorn!*

13. MIZO MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

For over three centuries, our ancestors amused themselves merry and enjoyed life with a few simple and outmoded musical instruments. These primitive rustic musical instruments helped them to while away the time. During feasts and dancing, (chawn leh lam), and during the celebrations of public feasts and festivals (kut ni vangthla), they made good use of their musical devices.

The Mizo musical instruments can be divided into two classes:

- 1) Those which they made themselves and
- 2) Those which were imported.

Musical Instruments Made by the Mizo

Mizo Fiddle (Mizo ting/tang)

The body or main part was a gourd. The staff or handle, which was used to keep the single fiddle string taut was made of bamboo. The staff or handle was carved till it was pointed at one end. This end was thrust through the gourd till two or three inches protruded on the other side of the gourd, and about a foot of the larger end remained; and the staff was fixed firmly in the gourd. For the single fiddle string, the fibre of a certain species of the Malay sago palm (*arenga sacharifera*) was used.

The top portion of the gourd about an inch above the staff was cut off and the rim was covered with the bladder skin of an animal, forming one side of a small drum. To fix the bladder skin firm and taut over the rim, improvised bamboo nails were hammered in at adequate intervals. One end of the fibre fiddle



Mizo guitar which is known as ting tang string was tied on the short pointed end of the staff and the other end was pulled taut over the bladder skin and tied to a peg made of the outside glossy surface or coutex of a bamboo. This peg was fixed firmly in a hole near the broader end of the right size, placed or pushed under the string, and rested on the bladder skin. Picking or pucking the string with the fore finger, the middle finger or the ring finger, produced three different tones when the string vibrated. An ancient Mizos song mentions their fiddle:

*While out walking neath the starry sky,
Without a glance at me, Thapuii she passed me by.*

*With my fiddle and my sweet voice,
Let's serenade the girl of my choice.*

Lem-lawi

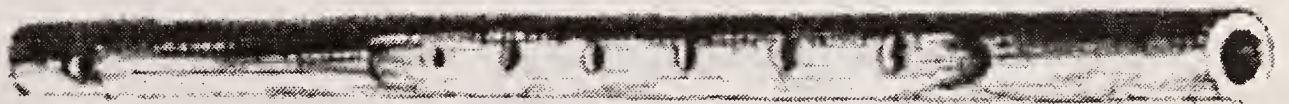
Using a flat piece of bamboo as wide and long as a man's fore finger, the Mizo of long ago used to make a Lemlawi ('Lem' is pronounce like 'them' and 'lawi' is pronounced like 'coy' meaning bashful). The bamboo strip was as flat and thin as a leaf. Two slits were cut through the flat side of the bamboo. The two slits divided the bamboo into three parts. They cut through one end of the middle and formed a tongue. The tongue or middle portion was carved and trimmed till it could wag and vibrate. A small piece of string or twine was tied to the end of the instrument near the base of the tongue and a long string was tied to the

other end near the tip of the tongue. The end of the short string was coiled round the base of the little finger of the left hand and the string was held in the first. The end of the longer string was also coiled round the base of the little finger of the right hand.

The Lemlawi was held firmly like a mouth organ by the lips and the corners of the mouth. Pulling the long string taut and jerking continuously with the right hand made the tongue or middle portion vibrate. By blowing like a mouth organ, different sounds were produced such as: buzzing sounds, humming sounds, the sound of the flapping of the wings of a hornbill as it flew over a village or even simple tunes. Our ancestors used their Lemlawi to amuse themselves and to while away the time.

Phenglawng (flute)

Using a hollow bamboo, obtained from virgin bamboo forest, about the size of the thickness of a man's thumb, our forefathers used to make a flute. They cut off the two joints at both ends and used only the hollow node. On one half they bored three holes all of same size and aligned. About an inch from the other end, and in line with the first three holes, they made another hole.



Flute made up from virgin bamboo forest is as thick
as man's thumbs.

They inserted a piece of bamboo at this end as far as the single hole. The inserted piece fitted exactly in the hollow and the top part was flattened so that they could put the end of the flute in the mouth and blow it to produce a musical sound. To produce low notes and high notes they manipulated three fingers over the holes. The flute which is blown by placing the rim of the hole against the lower lip made its appearance in Mizoram long after the home made flute.

Tum-phit (Pandean or Pan's pipes)



Tum-phit was indispensable when celebration of a head was taken in a raid.

The Tumphit consisted of three small bamboo pipes which emitted three different sounds when played in rotation. The tones are *d*, *r* and *m*. The Pandean pipes were played by putting the rim of the Tumphit against the lower lip and blowing downwards into the pipe. The Tumphit was indispensable when our ancestors held a dance in celebration of a head taken in a raid.

Mau Taw-taw-rawt (Bamboo trumpet)

Three or four bamboo nodes of different sizes were joined by fixing or inserting the smaller ones into the bigger ones. This resembled an improvised trumpet. The sounds or tones it produced were *d s m d s*. It was noisy, blatant and earsplitting, and was very useful for frightening and driving away wild animals when our forefathers were camping in the jungle.

Raw-chhem (Mizo bagpipes)

The Raw-chhem was a musical wind instrument of the Mizos. The body or main part was a gourd. The pipes fixed in the gourd were bamboo tubes of different lengths and sizes. The sound was produced through three valves on another piece of bamboo smaller than a man's little finger. The stalk of the gourd was cut off to form the mouth piece. By manipulating the three 'keys' with the fingers, the Rawchhem produced loud, melodious and harmonious sounds.

The Rawchhem, a musical instrument of the earlier days Mizos, was very much like the Scottish bagpipes. In comparison with the Scottish bagpipes, it was below par; but it could be regarded to be of the same category.

Tui-um-dar (Mizos Zither)

The Tuium dar was a Mizos stringed musical instrument. It was played like a Zither, lyre or harp with the finger tips. The whole instrument including the three strings was made in one piece from a single bamboo.

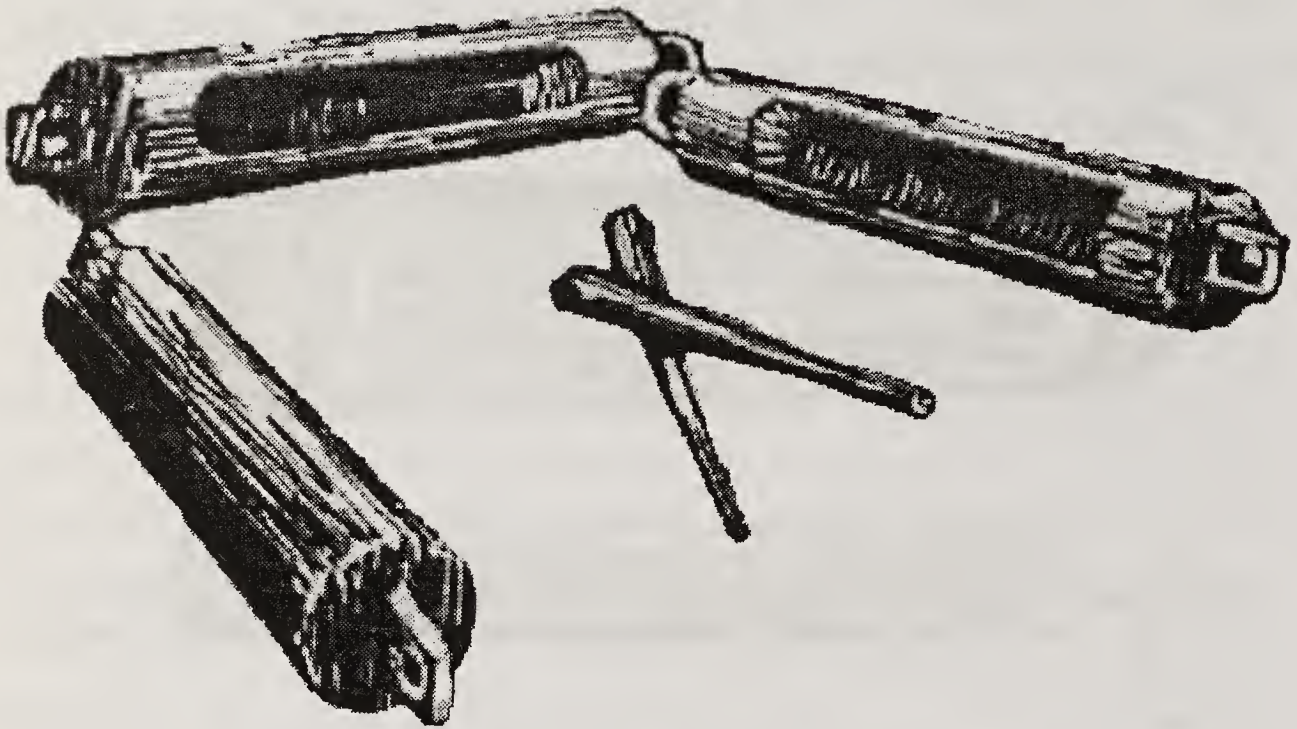


A stringed instrument which is played like zither.

The instrument was made from a large species of clump bamboo called 'Raw-nal' (*Dendrocalamus longipathus*), or 'Raw-thing' (*Bambusa tulda*); or from a 'Mau tak,' meaning real or true 'mau' (*Melocanna bamhusoides*). Four slits were made lengthwise, not too far apart, on the large bamboo between the two joints. The three portions between the slits were carved and made smooth to form the three strings of the instrument. The slits and strings were of different lengths to produce three different notes. It was played with fingers.

Talh-kuang (Trough drums)

The talhkuang consisted of three small drums made of hollowed out pieces of wood. The troughs were of different sizes and the notes they produced when they were struck were *d, r, m* *r, m, r, d*. The Talhkuangs were often seen on 'Lung dawh' memorial platforms erected at the exit or entrance to a Mizo village. The Talhkuangs were never taken into or kept in a Mizo house.

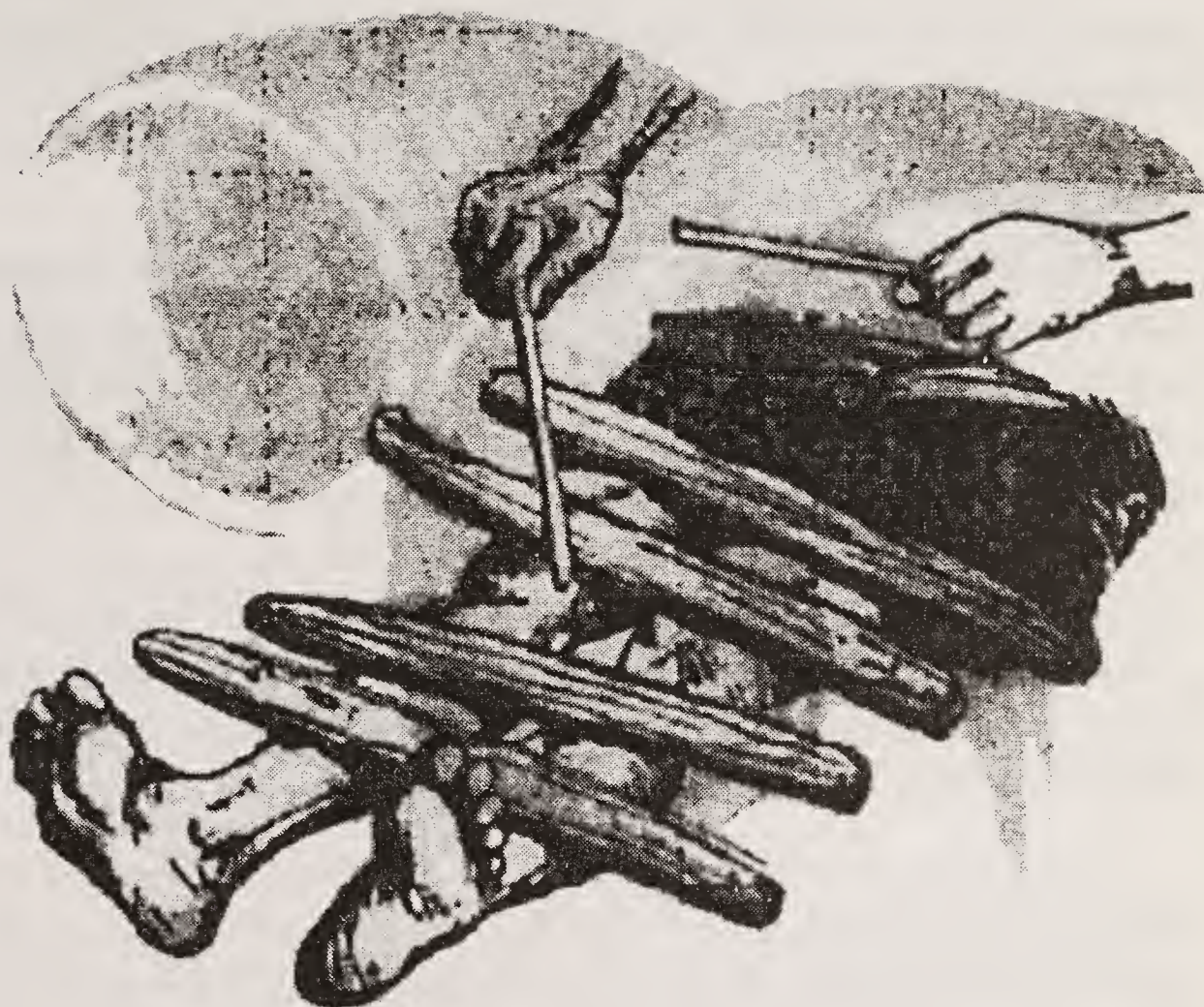


Talhkuang, consisted of three drums was never kept inside a house.

When chiefs, wealthy persons, warriors or hunters erected a memorial platform, they would leave three wooden Talhkuang on the platform together with two strikers or drum stricks. It was taboo to take them away from the memorial platform, and nobody ever attempted to do so. Though the drums were positioned or placed in a different way, the way they played was the same as the “Bengbung” (Mizos dulcimer), which we will describe next.

Beng-bung (Mizo dulcimer)

The Mizos dulcimer was made of small pieces of wood of different lengths and as large as a man’s wrist. The wood of the ‘Khawm-hma’ tree was used. The ‘Khawmhma’ (*Rhusmi-alta*) is a small, edible acid fruit, which grows in clusters. When the fruit is ripe, a white acid (sour) growth appears on it. This white acid growth is known to the Mizos as ‘beh’.



The beng-bung was mostly played by women

The Bengbung was played mostly by females; and to accentuate or make the sound louder and raise the volume, they would sit on a rice pounder and cover it with the rear part of their skirts thus converting the pounder into a sound chamber. They would stretch their legs out in front, place the pieces of Khawmhma wood on their shins and play their improved Mizo dulcimer, using two sticks. The Bengbung produced three different notes and sometimes, in addition, the player produced sounds in rapid succession by running the stick, swiftly on the key backwards or forewords.

Se-ki khawn (Mizo castanets)

The Mizo castanets consisted of two pointed mithun horns. On occasions when they danced the Chailam, it was used together with the Darkhuang, the Darbu and the small drum. The regular shrill beating sound of the mithun horns enhanced the melody and harmony.

Though, like a rattle, the Mizo castanets with their monotone, did not produce harmony by itself: the peculiar sound revives memories of the past.

Khuang (Drum)

The drum was made of a hollowed log, covered with a leather hide or skin at both ends. The skin was also stretched taut. A large drum was called a 'Khuangpui,' and a small one was known as a 'Khuangte.' The elongated oval shaped drum was called a 'Kawl khuang' (Burmese khuang). In bygone days they used to beat a drum with their hands; so they had the expression to describe an experienced drummer as 'Khuang ben a thiam' (He's pretty good at patting or slapping a drum). Later on, when they began to use a drum stick, they would say, 'Khuang a tum' (He's beating a drum).

Our ancestors made good use of the drum. In fact, it was almost over-worked. They regarded it as indispensable during the various festivals; when they chased and killed mithuns; at public feasts; during celebrations to honour someone. The prominence of the drum can be deduced from the Mizos simile, "Khuang lova chai ang mai" (Like dancing, playing or sporting without a drum). Some used this expression to denote that there was no pleasure in what they were doing; and others used it to say that they were doing something with incomplete paraphernalia.

Hnah tum (A typical Mizo musical instrument – a leaf)

Have you ever whistled a tune? Have you ever hummed a tune with a thin piece of paper and a comb held against your lips? Some Mizo play tunes on a leaf. They make a noise by blowing with a leaf in the mouth. They held a soft leaf with the lips and blow beautiful tunes.

'Hnah tum' may have originated many years ago and our parents, and it is still practiced by the present generation. The self-training starts in childhood. A nine year old boy climbs an

orange tree to pluck the fruit. He sits comfortably on the tree. He plucks an orange leaf and makes a noise by blowing the leaf. Gradually, with practice he becomes an expert at blowing tunes with a leaf.

A youngman with nothing to do, sits in the moonlight, his back propped against a mango tree. The village is quiet because most of the people have gone to bed:

*He hears the cry of a night-jar, and a firefly,
With its tail light goes flying by;*

*A star from on high, falls out of the sky,
An its light diminishes and fades out by and by.*

He puts a leaf to his mouth and begins to blow, he plays the tunes composed by Mizos poets.

Among the Mizo musical instruments, the ‘leaf’ is the best. It could play many tunes and the sound was angelic and exquisite. It could be compared to the violin. An expert player could control the sound according to his wish. He could make it trill; he could raise it in a crescendo; he could bring it down gradually to a pianissimo; and make it fade away. The Mizo enjoy playing tunes on a leaf; and in the still of night, the sound could be heard from a long distance.

Musical Instruments Not Made by the Mizo

Darkhuang

Among the Mizo musical instruments, the Darkhuang (big brass gong) was the greatest and the most costly. There was no fixed time for using it. On days of joy and also on days sorrow, they used to beat the Darkhuang and the sound echoed through the air. Everybody was allowed to beat it at any time. It was used with other gongs and provided measure or beat for the music.

Darbu

The Darbu was a set of three small brass gongs of different sizes and the sounds they emitted were drmormrd. It was on important days and occasions; during festivals and when they dance the Khuallam/Thingdim. Those who were good at playing the Darbu manipulated it according to their wishes. In the olden days most of the famous gongs were Darbus, such as Liando dar, Tuaichawng dar, Selbuang dar, Mairang dar, Vahluk dar, Kawm dar, Thlanthla dar, Mangai dar, Sa-rai dar, Darthir and Kawl dar.

In the songs composed by our forefathers, the Darbu is mentioned more than any other gongs. For example:

*Our Siallam gong, Siallam gong,
Let none find fault with our gong,
Bring your wealth, mithuns and song.*

*No matter if the Mangai gongs go away,
Our great Liando gongs, better in every way,
Resound in the land where we hold away.*

From the above songs, we can comprehend the fame, prominence, worth and value of their gongs.

Furthermore, from the Darbu, we get various poetical expressions such as : ‘Dar ang lengza,’ meaning ‘to sport, play, live and go-about together like the three gongs’ and ‘Dar ang tawng leh I,’ meaning ‘to meet again like the three gongs of Darbu.’

Darmang

The Darmang (medium sized brass gong) was never used on its own or by itself. It was useful as a counterpart with other gongs, to complement, complete and integrate the music. It was indispensable on occasions such as the Khuallam, the ‘Sapui aih’ (when they sacrificed a domestic animal and performed a ceremony over a tiger killed in a hunt); and when they danced during the ‘mitthi rawp lam,’ (held in honour of ones ancestors

and deceased relatives). The Darmang sounded two notes, a regular note and a syncopation note, the notes were m d m o r s m. The Mizos called it the 'Tuk boh' sound.

The Darkhuang, the Darbu and the Darmang were not manufactured by the Mizo. They are still being imported from the east. It is strange that our ancestors accepted those imported things raising objections!

In the year 1894 European Missionaries arrived and propagated a new religion. They also brought new songs and hymns with them. The popularity and use of the various ancient Mizo musical instruments gradually decreased. New musical instruments made their appearance in Mizoram. Among them was the violin which appeared in 1927 and was first played by a Mizo poet Vankhama (1906-1970). Ten years later, the Spanish Guitar was introduced to Mizoram by Mr. Lalthlamuana in the year 1937. These were followed by the Banjo, the Ukelele and other instruments which ushered in a new age for the Mizo.

14. CUSTOMARY APPORTIONING OF AN ANIMAL KILLED IN A HUNT

Long long ago, there were many wild creatures in Mizoram, and the extensive, thick, dark, gloomy forests abounded in wild beasts. To protect their villages and inherently just to procure or obtain food and meat, the Mizo used to hunt, shoot and kill animals. Those who were successful in hunting and killing big game received praise and approval, and could climb the social ladder. Nowadays the wild creatures of Mizoram have almost disappeared from sight and are classified under raw species. For this reason it is imperative and necessary for us to protect those beautiful, and graceful beasts and birds, otherwise they will become extinct.

We will not discuss how the Mizo hunted the animals. However, understand the mind and personality of the Mizo, we will explain how they “distributed and shared” an animal killed in a hunt. We will divide the “sharing” into two classes.

Customary Apportioning in a ‘Ramvah’

Before the gun made its appearance in Mizoram our forefathers used to hunt and kill animals with bows and arrows and spears. They used to ‘*Ramvah*,’ that is, ‘go into the jungle to procure food and meat.’ *Ramvah* also means to go hunting and return on the same day (leh-lang). Sometimes they called it ‘*Thlawhhma sa kah*,’ that is ‘hunting in and near their jhooms.’ On occasion, the carcass of the animal killed in the hunt or chase was apportioned as follows:

Customary Portion for the Man Who Shot the Animal

When two men hunted together and set eyes on an animal, they both shot at it; and the one who hit the mark or shot first,

got this portion. To be regarded as the one who shot and hit the animal, the bullet or arrow had to draw blood. When a hunter killed an animal with an arrow, spear or knife, it was stipulated that the weapon must necessarily draw blood.

In that case, the man who killed the animal was apportioned – the head, cut off above the neck, a piece of the entrails, a piece of all the organs of the abdomen, the part of the breast or throat above the sternum, the lower end of the spine, and the whole heart – the head was never split or cut in half. He was apportioned all these parts of the carcass, and if the animal he killed was a bear, he was also entitled to take the gall bladder if it was of any value. The gall or bile of the python and the bear was used as medicine to cure various ailments.

Receiving as Due a Whole Hindleg or Shoulder

When two friends hunted together, the one who did not shoot the animal in the chase received as due a leg of the animal that was killed. When they hunted in a group, the one who shot, struck or pierced was given a leg of the animal. If the wounded animal managed to escape, they followed its spoor and tracked it, and the first person who came upon or found the carcass was also given a leg or shoulder of the animal. In that way, two or three persons could receive as due a shoulder or hind leg of the animal. This due was known to the Mizos as ‘Sa bawp man.’

When two friends hunted together, the whole hind leg was pulled off and given as ‘Sa bawp man.’ When the wounded animal was chased by a group, a large portion of the flesh or meat of the thigh was cut off to be shared by all who participated in the chase. In that case, the ‘Sa bawp man’ consisted of a little bit of the flesh of the thigh, the thigh bone, the leg and hoof below the knee and the hide covering the whole leg.

Generally, according to the custom of the Mizo, the left shoulder and leg (the whole left fore leg) was given to the chief as a ‘Sachhiah,’ tax or tribute. If the animal was shot and killed with a borrowed gun, the right shoulder was given to the owner

of the gun as payment for the use of the gun. That is why, though the animal killed in a chase had four legs, only two or three persons could receive the ‘Sa bawp man’ as a due.

- | | | |
|-------|---|---|
| No. 1 | - | Portion of the man who shot the animal. |
| No. 2 | - | <i>Sachhiah</i> , given to the chief as tax or tribute. |
| No. 3 | - | Payment for use of borrowed gun or ‘Sa bawp man.’ |
| No. 4 | - | Both the hind legs are ‘Sa bawp man.’ |

Washing and Cleaning the Entrails

When they hunted in a group and an animal was shot and killed, the man who shot the animal selected and assigned some old, aged and elderly persons in the group to wash, rinse and clean the belly, bowels, guts, innards, viscera and intestines of the dead animal. The number of persons chosen for the task generally depended on the size of the animal killed in the hunt.

The Mizo measurement of an animal was the ‘sum.’ One ‘sum’ equals one fists of a man. The girth of the chest of such animals as the pig, tiger and bear etc. are measured in this way. When measuring the girth of an elephant’s chest, two thumbs’ length is added to the ordinary ‘sum.’

If the animal killed was four sums (four fists), four elderly persons were picked and singled out to wash and clean the entrails. For an animal of five sums (pronounced – sumz), five were assigned. The four or five persons who washed and cleaned the entrails, divided the viscera equally among themselves. They prepared and set apart an extra share of the entrails which was given to the man who shot the animal.

First of all, the Blacksmith’s rib meat (*Thirdeng sa nak*) was set aside to be given to the blacksmith as a due by those who were successful in a hunt or in trapping animals (See chapter 2, regarding ‘Thirdeng’). Next, the ears and its adjacent parts were set aside. According to Mizo custom, the one who shot the

animal gives an ear and its adjacent parts to someone as a mark of lifelong friendship. The rest of the carcass was cut and divided among all those who took part in the chase.

The elderly ones in the group divided the meat into shares or portions. They would all take a stick each and sharpen one end to a point. Each of them spread a large leaf on the ground and drove the pointed end of their sticks in the ground till they were embedded in the ground near each leaf. First of all, the choice meat was divided, next the not so good meat was divided, and last of all, the bones and the hide were cut into pieces and divided equally. They would skewer their pieces of meat on the pointed rod or stick. The man who shot the animal and those who had got the shoulder or hind leg and also those who washed and cleaned the entrails were included and entitled to receive a share of the 'vantlang sa.'

The words 'animal killed in a hunt' included and applied to those on which a due, tax or tribute (sachhiah) had been fixed or ordained. The Sachhiah was given to the chief and blacksmith. Among those animals, the smallest was the barking deer. Among the larger and more dangerous animals which were hunted, such as the bear, the elephant, the wild gayal, the tiger and the rhinoceros etc., the binturong or Malayan cat-bear (*Arctictis binturong*) was the smallest. The binturong is known to the Mizo as Zamphu. It is a carnivorous mammal with a prehensile tail and tufted ears. It lives in the trees (arboreal) and moves about at night (nocturnal). Generally, the following birds and beasts which were regarded as small game were exempted from the Sachhiah tax or tribute. They were the pheasant, jungle fowl, porcupine, leopard, golden cat (*Felis temmincki*) and the wolf.

When they returned to the village, the ones who got the hind legs (Sa bawp man) and those who washed the entrails were bound to contribute a pot of *zu* and take it to the house of the man who shot the animal. There they would sing and dance, and rejoice and celebrate the successful hunt. If they did not have any *zu*, they had to buy a pot of *zu* and contribute for it.

Sa Chhawl Chhin (Covering a Shot Animal With Branches and Twigs)

When a dauntless hunter – warrior (Pa-sal-tha) went out hunting alone and killed a large animal which he was unable to carry back home; he covered the carcass where it had fallen with branches and twigs. He also spread his turban or jacket upon it, and went home to invite the entire village to go out and divide the carcass among themselves. In Mizo this was known as ‘Sa chhawl chin.’

When he reached the village, first of all he would inform those he favoured, such as his near relations, his sister’s or daughter’s husbands and their families, and his sons and daughters who were living separately and independently on their own, about the exact whereabouts of the carcass covered with branches and twigs. He did this so that they would be able to reach the carcass first, before the rest of the villagers arrived on the scene; and they would be able to claim the right shoulder and two hindlegs as ‘sa bawp man.’

The dividing of the ‘sa chhawl chhin’ meat was done in the same way as when they hunted in a group. Generally, the youngmen would disdain from going out and take part on these occasions. They practised ‘Tlawmngaihna’ (self-denial or unwillingness) and regarded the ‘sa chhawl chhin’ meat as fit only for old people and children.

Another Custom of Apportionment

When the Chapchar Kut festival or the pawl Kut was drawing high, they would hunt to obtain or procure meat for the festival. Before they set out they would discuss and come to an agreement on how to divide the meat. When they set out to encircle or hem in a wild beast or when they went out in a group to hunt together, the meat was apportioned and shared according to the ready made rules which they had agreed upon before they had left the village. Sometimes they would sleep out and spend two or three nights in a jungle.

Generally, on those occasions, they would set aside only the sachhiah; and the man who shot the animal would take as an extra share, the head cut off above the neck and a few small bits of the viscera. The rest of the carcass was cut like vegetables and greens and divided equally. No one received a right shoulder or hindleg (sa bawp man), and there were no special shares for those who washed and cleaned the entrails.

Ram-chhuah (Big Game Hunting)

In the Mizo life of love stories, tales and legends of big game hunting were the most popular and most interesting topics of conversations. However, instead of following and pursuing their actions, deeds, doings, deportment and manner of hunting – to enable the new generation to understand the personality of the Mizo of yester years – we will trace the more preponderant aspects and facts of the characteristics of their forefathers, which they ought to know or at least have an idea.

‘Ramchhuah’ means going a long distance to hunt and spend many nights in the thick, dark forests where wild beasts roamed. The animals they intended to hunt were mostly bears, wild boars, stags, sambar deer, Indian elk with antlers or many branched horns, elephants and wild gayal (*Bibos gaurus*) such as the ‘Se-le and Tum-pang.’ Other species of the wild gayal are the Kawlfung, the Phaisa and the Rauri. The safari lasted many days, so they used to go hunting big game when they had free or leisure time, during autumn or after the harvest, or before they cut their jhooms, or when they were waiting for the cut jhooms to dry.

The hunters prepared in advance for the safari. They took the urine-impregnated earth from under their houses and leached it to make crystals of saltpeter. The saltpeter was mixed with the charcoal of the timber of the Khawmhma tree or sernam tree (The ‘Khawmhma’ tree has been described in chapter XII, I (i). The ‘sernam’ (*Litseen citrata*) tree has lemon-scented leaves. Its tender berries are used by Gurkhas for flavouring stews. Charcoal made from the timber of the sernam is used by the

Mizo in the manufacture of gunpowder. The charcoal and the home-made saltpeter were mixed and pounded with pestle.

The paddy pounder was employed, and it was a tiresome and fatiguing job. In this task, the damsels and maidens gave them a hand and did the pounding; and in return, when the hunters were successful, they brought back and presented precious ornaments to the young ladies. The ornaments which were obtained with great hazard were the shin bones of the Indian elk to be used as hair pins, and ivory obtained from elephant tusks and choice bones to be used as earrings or ornaments.

When they set out, they were extremely punctilious about certain superstitious observances. Their methods of augury and divination were as follows:

- (i) When they set out from the village in the morning and if a bird known to them as 'Bawngpui or Irliak sava' led the way and went before them chirping and twittering noisily and incessantly, they regarded it as a good omen of success. If it branched off and flew off in a tangent, or if it flew towards the village they had just left, they regarded it as a bad omen and failure in the hunt.
- (ii) If they had a dream about someone being murdered, or if the dream was about a funeral, they regarded it as a good dream and a good omen of success in the hunt. If in their dream they saw and heard mourners lamenting, crying, sobbing and wailing loudly and noisily, they believed that they were going to chant the 'Hlado' when they returned from the hunt. The Hlado was the hunter's cry or chant which was raised directly when wild animal was killed in a hunt, and also on the road home and before entering the village. It was used only in the case of 'Sa-hrang' (big game) animals such as bears, elephants, wild gayal and wild pig. On the other hand, if in their dreams they were happy and gay and laughing uproariously, they believed that they were going to sob bitterly due to some kind of mishap during the hunt.
- (iii) At night when they heard the 'kui' (kwee) cry of a nocturnal

bird or beast, they construed it as the cry of the 'Sa-phung.' The 'saphung' was a ghost or spirit that cried at night. The hunters believed that the sa-phung was a village crier announcing, "You are going to shoot and kill a wild beast!" When they heard the *saphungs* cry they believed that they were going to bring home the head of a large animal. It is said that Mizo ghost hunters discovered that the cry of the *saphung* was really the cry or call of the large civet cat (*Viverra megaspela*).

- (iv) When a hunting party was on its way to the far distant hunting ground, far from human habitation, frequented by elephants, wild gayal and other large animals; and if a gobboob ape cast, threw, flung or pitched at them; or if the 'Tlak-awrh' bird which has a long beak and feeds on the larvae of hornets, swooped and flew at them and worried and irritated them, they believed that they were unlucky and would meet with accidents and untoward happenings. The more superstitious among them would even go to the length of turning and returning home!

When they reached the hunting ground where the elephant and other wild beasts roamed, they constructed a hut. Cooking the food, fetching water and firewood and other necessary chores were all done by the youngsters. When the meals they cooked were unpalatable, no one ever criticised them. Among the Mizo of yester years there was a man named 'Vana Pa.' He was well-known, famous and renowned for his unselfish, gentle, gracious and amiable disposition. It is said that earlier he was as disagreeable and bad tempered as he became amiable and good tempered later. His son's name was Van-chiaua, so he was called 'Vana Pa.' His real name was Thang-za-chhing. When they camped out in the jungle, he was always polite and gracious. He would praise and speak well of the culinary efforts of the youngsters in the following way.

If the cooked rice was hard, he would say, "The rice is nice and hard. This is the way I like it." If the rice was burnt or had a burnt smell he would say, "It has an appetising savoury smell. Its

just the way I relish it.” And if the cooked rice was usually soft, he would comment, “Their no need to masticate it, and it is easy to swallow. This is how I like it! If the rice was granular in appearance and cooked hard, not soft or watery, but in the ordinary Mizo manner, he would exclaim, “What a wonderful sight! All the rice on my plate is like a large ant’s eggs! Its cooked exactly as I like it.”

If the curry was more salty than usual, he would say, “Its gives me a good appetite, so that I’m able to consume more rice. This is what I favour and have a fancy for.” If the youngsters forgot to put salt in the curry, and it was tasteless, insipid, unsavoury, he would still praise the saltless curry and say, “Bravo!” This is good. I won’t feel parched or thirsty for a long time. This is what I’m fond of.”

By praising and speaking well of their cooking he was able to make them eager, earnest and enthusiastic. All the youths desired to follow him more than other elders and hunters when they camped in the jungle.

Sometimes when they were hunting big game they came upon a herd of animals. On such an occasion, the oldest person among them was given the opportunity to shoot first. His juniors never ever attempted to take a pot shot first. When it was an elephant, and they shot a volley at it, and managed to kill it, the man who shot first and drew blood first was regarded as the one who shot and killed it; and he received the head and other portions as usual.

When they were many on safari for a long time, the youngmen would become pensive and would compose and sing songs such as the following:

*Far away, I’m anxious in the jungle
About ‘white tusks’ and my girl (village balle),
My love, Thangi-the gentle.*

Far away, in their village the maidens would also be worried about their male friends; and they too would compose and sing songs such as:

*In jungles death is rampant,
If you wish to bear infants,
Don't underestimate the elephants.*

Though the big game hunting ground was a long distance away from home, perseveringly and with great difficulty, they would bring back the heads of animals they killed. But when they killed an elephant, the head was too big and too heavy to carry all the way home. Consequently, they would only take the tusks and the base of the tusks and the hollow of the upper lip immediately below the centre of the nose, in lieu of the head.

They would also smoke and dry the chief's portion (lal sachhiah) of the meat and would give it to him smoked and dried as payment for the use of the borrowed gun. The rest of the meat, fat and entrails was dried over a fire, and they carried home as much as they could. When they arrived back home in their village, they distributed the meat and shared it with their neighbours. And of course, widows were never ever overlooked, omitted or forgotten!

15. SA AIH CEREMONY

Long ago, when there were thick, dark, gloomy forests in Mizoram, and there were very few people living in our land, many wild, forecious beasts roamed in the forests. Some of the wild beasts used to attack, assail and set upon the domestic animals in and near the villages; and also destroy, wreck and ruin the cultivation plots and jhooms. Sometimes there were occasions when they even attacked Homo sapiens. That is why our ancestors used to hunt, shoot and kill wild animals. It seems that they did this to protect and defend themselves, their domestic animals and their jhooms. They also hunted animals to procure and obtain food and meat. On the other hand, hunting and killing animals in the chase was also an important matter for their survival; so they had to do their best to gain supremacy over the wild beasts.

Brave, courageous, dauntless hunters and those who were successful in trapping wild beasts were esteemed and highly regarded, so much so that for the men hunting was one of the greatest competition and contest among them and they strove, assayed and exerted themselves and contended to out do each other in this greatest of sports – big game.

Celebrating the taking of the head of an animal and holding ceremonies over the animals killed in the chase, and dancing to celebrate a successful hunt were almost one and the same thing. When they hunted and killed an animal and brought the head home, on that same night they celebrated the taking of the head, and the next day, or when it was convenient, they held a ceremony over the head. On those occasions the songs they sang and the dances they performed were all related and connected with the success of the hunt and the taking of the head of a wild beast. Sometimes they would chant the 'Hlado' when they were singing and dancing and celebrating; but generally when a man was

successful in the hunt chase, and on his way back when he reached the outskirts of his village, he would chant the Hlado. Moreover, among the various songs sung by the Mizo, the Hlado is one of the most ancient songs.

When a 'Pasaltha' (fearless hunter, self-denial etc.) shot and killed a 'sa hrang' that is, a larger and more dangerous animal, such as the elephant, the tiger or the wild boar, it was compulsory for him to perform a 'sa aih' ceremony, according to the customs of our ancestors. Though the barking deer was not regarded nor counted among the dangerous animals, to shoot and kill a barking deer was like receiving a blessing, so they used to perform a 'sa aih' ceremony over it. If they had a mind to or wished to do so, they also performed ceremonies over the heads of the Indian elk (*rusa aristitelis*) or the wild goat 'sa-za' (*Nemorhaedus bubaline*).

No special time or day was set or fixed for holding the 'sa aih' ceremony. It could be performed the day after the animal was shot or trapped or after many days had elapsed. A mithun or a boar (hog) or a sow was killed and offered as a sacrifice and the meat was consumed at a public feast. The 'sa aih' ceremony was an expensive, difficult and burdensome undertaking. If a poor man shot and killed a wild beast, it was not compulsory for him to perform the 'sa aih' ceremony. It was optional and he was exempted. Our forefathers and old folks used to say that, "The designation Pasaltha was for those who were wealthy and prosperous."

The day on which the ceremony was performed was spent in drinking *zu* the whole day. They killed the animal which was to be offered in the ceremony and in the evening they enjoyed a public feast. There were no special rites or formalities except the uttering and reciting of an incantation as a benediction by an elder. Branches and boughs of the Thing-sia (*castanopsis tribuloides*) tree were planted and erected in front of the house of the person who shot and killed the wild beast over which the ceremony was being performed. If the person had already performed, 'sa aih' ceremonies over many animals, he planted

and erected many Thingsia boughs; and the boughs were tied, bound, linked, connected and attached with creepers and climbing plants known to the Mizo as 'vawm hrui.' The erected boughs were called 'sa ngul.' A Hlado song which was sung during the 'sa aih' ceremony is as follows;

*Find no fault with our front yard, dear neighbours,
It's dense with leafy boughs.*

Another song which they sang when they danced to celebrate the success of a hunt goes as follows:

*Which are more, humans or erected boughs,
Manacled with creepers in front of our house.
Manacled with creepers in front of our house,
Before they wither they'll be living boughs.*

Saikuti, the famous Mizo poetess, who lived between the years 1830-1921, composed the following couplet when her big brother performed the 'sa aih' ceremony, and when his front yard was dense with erected branches signifying that he had shot and killed many wild beasts:

*Whose front yard had boughs erected densely,
They are great hunters, dub them the 'Thanghlei family'.*

(Thanghlei means superfamous; famous over and above, or exceedingly famous.)

Our ancestors had a high regard for the head of animals taken as a trophy in hunting, trapping or in any other way. They bound the skulls with cane or rattan to hold them together and improve their appearance. When the skulls including the jaw bones were dry, they fixed them on the wall of their front verandah or porch, to be exhibited or displayed. They regarded it as a kind of greatness. It showed that the owner of the house was a brave warrior or hunter – a man of derring-do, who had done many daring deeds. It tickled the fancy of strangers to put up at such a house and made them feel honoured. On the other hand, their host who was successful hunter, did his best to put meat in the lunch packets of his guests when they departed from his house. Those who could do that were respected and esteemed.

When the Pasaltha died, they erected fencing posts round his grave and stretched ropes between the posts. They took all the heads of animals from the walls of the verandah and suspended and hung them all on the ropes. It signified that it was the grave of a great hunter. They regarded it as extremely grand.

The Mizo of yore were religiously strict and punctilious about the 'sa aih' ceremony performed over a tiger killed in a hunt or chase. Their opinion, notion, thinking and view of the tiger was remarkable and extraordinary. In Mizo the tiger is known as 'sakei.' When they spoke about the tiger they never uttered or mentioned its real name, because it was inauspicious to do so. They would use substitute words such as 'sapui or sakawl.' They regarded the tiger as a 'Khuavang' (a guardian spirit), and they believed that it was all-knowing. They believed that a tiger knew about the sins and faults of the persons so much so that it was felt that even the sin of adultery committed by the person was known to the tiger. They believed that a tiger would not attack, maul or bite an ordinary person who had not committed great or venal sins. So when a person was attacked, mauled or bitten by a tiger, they believed implicitly that, that person had committed adultery. He would never feel easy at heart and the woman would not feel easy in her mind unless she had confessed her sin to her infant who could not comprehend anything. That is why, in such a situation, a Mizo woman would whisper in the ear of her baby, "I committed adultery." It was the only way in which she could set her troubled, guilty mind at ease.

It was not often that a hunting party shot or killed a tiger. They only did so when it was necessary for them to defend themselves in an inevitable situation. And they would never say, "I shot and killed it." They would say, "It was struck by a thunderbolt which was moving horizontally," in order to minimize the fact.

Among the Mizo using understatements and minimizing the fact is regarded as a virtue – a form of *Tlawmngaihna*. To them it is an indication of self-restraint and humility. Foreigners fail to understand this and regard it as falsehood, fibbing or untruth.

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A lady working on her loom.



Music has always been an integral part of the Mizo way of life. The drum, gong, darkhuang, khuang, seki no etc. are traditional musical instruments.



Traditional gun-powder container made of bison's horns.



Shields used by warriors during wars and ambush.



Traditional weapons - sword 'Kawlhnām', spear 'fei' and muggle-loaded gun 'tukuli silai'.



Warriors back from hunting being welcomed and offered beer by ladies.



Tools for jhoom cultivation.

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The understatement to cover the truth, “It was struck by a thunderbolt moving horizontally,” was used because it was taboo to kill a tiger. This understatement was also used by our ancestors when they killed a rhinoceros. They believed that the spirit of the dead rhino was following them to do them harm. To fool or deceive the spirit, on their way home, they would split a bamboo tree that was still standing and put a cross piece between the split halves to form a doorway. All those who were in the hunting party would go through the improved bamboo doorway and the last man would strike the cross piece with his knife, so that the split halves of bamboo which were kept apart by the cross piece would come together again, and the door would be closed forever. The spirit of the rhino would be baffled and at a loss, and would not be able to follow them!

When they killed a tiger, they would never be puffed up about it. They would conceal and hide the fact without disclosing it; and they would also leave the carcass untouched and never take it home. The Lai (Pawi) clans who are the descendants of Mizo regarded the tigers as their brothers and sisters. When a tiger was killed they mourned its death. The Lai also have this saying to boot, “The tiger never bites, seizes or devours the Lai (Pawi).”

As time went on, their ideas and notions about the tiger changed gradually. Because the tigers used to prey upon their domestic animals and even seized and devoured them in their villages and under their houses, they began to kill tigers without reluctance, or dread. They set ‘Kar traps’ which released spears or pointed bamboos, or fired a gun to kill the tiger. When a tiger killed a cow or any other domestic animal which belonged to a Pasaltha, he would wait and watch over the

dead animal, and shoot and kill the tiger when it came to eat the remains of its kill.

When a tiger became a nuisance and a manace for the village, they set 'Fal' traps which crushed the tiger beneath heavy logs. No matter what the reason was for killing the tiger; and no matter what ways and means they used to kill it; whenever a tiger was killed, they performed a 'sa aih' ceremony over it without fail. And since it was difficult, exacting and burdensome to perform the ceremony it was generally the responsibility of the chief. The ceremony was called 'sapui vui' (the disposing of a dead tiger).

To perform the 'sa aih' ceremony over the dead tiger, the chief would kill a mithun, a pig, a goat and a dog. Killing only a mithun for the ceremony was also permissible. Like in the case of other wild animals, the 'sa aih' ceremony could be performed the day after the tiger was killed or it could be postponed indefinitely. If the ceremony was performed the day after it was killed, they erected wooden X-es in front of the chief's house and put the carcass on them, making it stand upright. If it was performed much later, the hide or skin of the tiger was stuffed with branches and twigs and sewn into its original form. The stuffed animal was made to stand upright in front of the chief's house.

On the eve of the 'sa aih' ceremony of a tiger, the man who shot it and the person who helped him to kill it were not allowed to sleep. It was compulsory for them to keep up the whole night. On the day of ceremony no one was allowed to go to their jhooms or into the jungle. And if it was really necessary for a woman to fetch water from the spring or water hole, some of the men followed her to guard and protect her from harm. Our ancestors believed that on the day of the 'sa aih' ceremony, tigers were wont to or made it a rule of attacking and mauling anyone who went into the jungle; so they were very careful and circumspect. In the chief's house a large gong was sounded at appropriate or sufficient intervals.

They also beat a drum and played tunes on a Darbu (a set of three gongs). A Darbu song sung on such occasions goes as follows:

*The owl and the swift at loggerheads,
They have bald heads, both bald heads.*

The animals were killed for the ceremony, and all the people in the village were allowed to take part in drinking *zu*, and in the feast that followed. In the chief's house, he and his elders held the drinking of *zu* and made preparations for the main part of the 'sapui aih' ceremony. In the afternoon, when the Sun had passed the meridian, they began dancing to celebrate the killing of the tiger.

When it was time to do so, the man who was performing the 'sapui aih' ceremony, with six or more elders came out of the chief's house, to walk round and round the dead tiger. They were all dressed in feminine attire. They covered their heads with pieces of cloth. Each of them wore a 'Kawrchei' (a white coat or jacket with broad coloured bands on the arms, back and front – worn by young women). Over their shoulders they wore 'Puanrin' cloths used by women. They carried open-work baskets used especially by women for carrying wood and water. They wore women's skirts and ivory earrings and also held women's tobacco pipes.

The man who performed the ceremony held a hand cotton spindle for twisting two or more thread together. He would rub and roll out the spindle upon his hip or thigh and make it swing and strike the dead tiger, when the group dressed as women came out of the chief's house, a number of jokers or clowns came out at the same time. They made the people laugh uproariously. During that time, it was inauspicious for the man who performed the ceremony to laugh. It was believed that if he laughed, something untoward would happen to him. So, to ward off, stave off and prevent and avert any misfortune, he held a porcupine quill under his armpit so that even if he did laugh unintentionally, it was the porcupine quill that laughed in his stead.

The man who performed the ceremony, twisted the strands of thread by spanning the spindle and making it strike the dead beast three times. He had stuffed ash in his pipe instead of tobacco; and now and then he would blow hard through the stem of the pipe, emitting ash clouds which fell and settled on the dead wild animal. Without any fear and without any qualms whatsoever, he would scoff the dead tiger and sing the following song:

Where the path forks, who spent the night?

Phawthira and Hrangchala;

Near phaileng we cudgeled tiger's head with might,

Chopped with main and might... How!

After that dancers would go into the chief's house. They would take off their feminine attire and change their clothes, and come out again dressed as brave hunters and warriors. The man performing the 'sakei aih' ceremony would wear a striped turban. He would also wear a headdress made of long feathers of the *bhimraj* or sheath; a powder horn hung on a strap and a gun. In his hands he held a hard boiled egg and a smooth round white pebble. He would push or force the pebble into the dead tiger's mouth and at the same time he would put the peeled boiled egg into his own mouth. He would scoff the dead beast and say, "You eat the pebble and I'll eat the egg. Let's see who swallow adjust first. The last one to swallow is a coward! There, I've finished eating the egg. Haven't you finished yet? You take the low road and I'll be the dauntless, intrepid hero of the South and I'll be the dauntless, intrepid hero of the North!" Thus, he would treat the tiger with contempt, disdain and scorn. He would strike the tiger's head three times with his sword, and without loading his gun with shots he would shoot the dead tiger point blank. Waving his sword and singing a song of victory, he would prance round the dead tiger. His companions would also deride the tiger.

Our ancestors believed that the other tigers who were watching the drama from the hill tops, would see the great hunter

treating the carcass of the tiger roughly; and they would realize that he was dangerous and indomitable. Trembling with fear they would exclaim, “How dreadful, appalling erect, they would run helter skelter, far away into the jungle!”

If the dead tiger had mauled and bitten a human being, the man who performed the ceremony would dig out or gouge out the eye-balls of the tiger with a pointed stick and throw them away. He and his companions would then leave the mutilated carcass and enter the chief’s house. Some of the village elders would carry the carcass to the outskirts of the village where it was discarded. And that was the end of the ‘sapui vui’ ceremony.

The day on which the ceremony of the disposal of a dead tiger was performed on the village square, many of the people would be in the chief’s house drinking *zu* together. They would give their mug or cup of *zu* to another person with the words, ‘Ka leh a che,’ and drink to one another’s health and pledge with one another, and there would be plenty of *zu* and meat. The common people of no importance in the community – living on the outskirts of the village would also be satiated beyond their wildest dreams.

Another curious and notable superstition which our ancestors believed in was the ‘Thih-thiap.’ They believed that when the dead body of a man who had killed a tiger during his life-time and had duly performed the ‘sapui aih’ ceremony was awaiting burial, the ‘Thih-thiap’ would try to take revenge on the man. The ‘Thih-thiap’ had seven ears. If the Thih-thiap could not come himself, it would send flies or grasshopper or other insects as emissaries. If the insects came and settled on the corpse, they would devour the corpse, so they guarded the cadaver carefully.

They appointed a large number of children to beat the walls of the house and also posts which supported the floor, with sticks or firewood, to cause a tremendous din and racket, which would frighten and drive away the “Thih-thiap’ and the insects. As payment for guarding the corpse, the children were given chunks

of meat of the animal which was killed as 'mit-thi-thlai-chhiahna' (An animal which was slain to offer a sacrifice for the dead person). On the other hand, in the midst of sorrow, misfortune and death, the children had a rollicking time and enjoyed themselves immensely.

16. COMMUNITY FISHING WITH HERBAL TOXINS

A whole village going fishing using herbal toxin is one of the most pleasant and enjoyable outing occasion. There have been occasions of outings to catch fish, done by a group of friends, in small streams. There have also been occasions on which a large number of people planned fishing trips to deep pools with under water caves. But the following accounts will be about a whole village going fishing. Although different villages have different ways of doing and going about things, this will be a general account or narrative in which we will try to highlight the beauty of the well composed, well balanced, harmonious life of the Mizo.

Herbal toxins were used for stupefying or poisoning fish; and the following are the popular and prominent ones which were mostly used:

- (a) **Khangding** : It is a species of climbing acacia.
- (b) **Khangtak** : This is also a species of climbing acacia.
- (c) **Anka-sa** : The name of an edible plant, the species of compositae whose yellow flowers resemble the camomile, and are very pungent in taste.
- (d) **Ru-thei** : The name of a tree, the fruit and bark of which are very effective. The kernel of the fruit is edible.
- (e) **Ruchek** : A smaller species of the 'ru-lei' climbing plant like the wistaria. The roots are used for stupefying and poisoning fish, and are very effective (*Milletia pachecarpa*).
- (f) **Khaw-kherh** : Walnut tree (*Juglans regia*). The leaves and shoots and also the fruit are used for stupefying or poisoning fish.

- (g) **Re-lei (*millettia pachecarpa*)** : See (e) Ruchek.
- (h) **Khiangzo** : The bark of this tree is used for stupefying or poisoning fish.
- (i) **Ngaih-hih** : The name of a creeper somewhat like the honey-suckle. Its roots are used for stupefying or poisoning fish. Those who carry out the operation, however, often suffer from an irritation of the skin caused by the poison.

Among these toxins there were some that opposed each other, so those of the same species were used as far as possible; if not, they used those that were effective when mixed.

Every household was included in the outing, so it was announced and proclaimed by the village announcer. The whole of the next day was employed by all the people to obtain or procure herbal toxins. With treat dash, get-up-and-go, verve and vitality they went to the jungle in search of the herbal toxins. On the day of the outing to catch fish, one male person from each family set out to participate in the fishing. If from the home of an indolent family or one that had no able-bodied worker; or from the house of a widow, an adolescent or a boy who was big enough to do chores for the young men in the Zawlbuk took part in the jaunt, or excursion to catch fish for the whole village, no one grumbled or criticized him. Generally, because the fishing with herbal toxins entailed, sleeping one or two nights in the jungle on the bank of a stream, they carried some uncooked rice, cooking utensils, axes, the inevitable Mizo chem (knife), and of course, the herbal toxins. One clear, and conspicuous fact was that no gynecomorphous, females of the distaff side or the gentle, weaker sex were allowed to take part in the 'Sa-ngha lang-vuak.' The group was composed entirely of males.

When they reached the river or big stream which they had in mind, they put all their things on the sandy bank of the stream. Immediately some of them would start working to build a large hut to accommodate all of them for shelter. The Pasalthas who were brave hunters, and the Ram-va-chals, who were fond of outdoor life and had explored the area and knew the course and

nature of that particular river, would check the stream to see where it was convenient to put up bamboo lattice blockades; and where they would soak the herbs containing poison, after the herbs had been beaten to a pulp.

As for the elders, who were responsible for doing the cooking, they would make a remark something like the following: "The connundrum or riddle." Are lunatics vegetables, humans or animals?' try vets. "That is they give veterinarians headaches, hard times or troubled minds; but in Mizo society, elders usually make stone trivets. So come on, let's get some stones to make trivets for the fire and cooking pots – 'Lunatics try vets, but elders make trivets!' so saying, they would make 'Thuks' (Mizo hearth enclosed by three stones which support the pot over the fire).

There was no need to assign anyone to do certain tasks. Each person did his best at what he was good at; and the work of catching a large amount of fish by stupefying them with herbal toxins proceeded without a hitch, like clockwork.

The river had to be blocked with a bamboo lattice at four or five places. Some of them had already cut and fetched bamboos from the jungle and those bamboos were split and latticed, the holes or apertures of the lattices were big enough for a man to insert two fingers. The middle aged bachelors in the group selected the places likes rapids, fords and quiet shallow pools where the current was weak. In those places pointed stakes or poles were driven with alacrity into the bottom of the stream, with improvised cudgels, across the width of the stream. About three feet of the bottom of the bamboo lattices were laid along the bottom or bed of the stream and stamped and trodden upon to make it firm and secure, and the middle portion curved up against the stakes.

To prevent the fishes from leaping over it, the top portion of the bamboo lattice rose up above the level or surface of the water to the height of a man of mediocre height. The sides of the lattices where they met, joined or overlapped were made secure

by trying them with split flexible strips of bamboo. The number of places they set up blockades depended on the size of the group and the amount of toxin they possessed; and they laid claim on all the stupefied fish from the first blockade to the last blockade situated downstream.

By the time the Sun had set and the dark shadows began to envelop them, they had done all that was necessary; and the next morning they commenced the most important tasks of beating the herbs to a pulp on the partly submerged rocks situated upstream, just above the first blockade. Using truncheons which were three feet long and one and a half inches thick, and as large as blowpipes, they beat the various herbs, fruit, roots or barks – causing a noisy din or racket which rumbled and reverberated. Each of them worked with verve to outdo the others in beating their herbs to a pulp; and nobody thought of taking a rest. At the height of their belabouring, the noise was like the sound of many people pounding paddy with pestles one after the other in quick succession.

After they had belaboured the herbs to a pulp for some time, a middle aged bachelor (*Val upa*) would give the word, “Now then, let’s soak and rinse the pulp in the stream!” They would comply almost at the same time. After they had beaten and dipped and soaked the pulp two or three times, the fish would begin to get stupefied. The words of a song composed by Shri Rokunga, “Ah, thirsty fish rush hither and thither!” is enacted and becomes a visible act. The youngsters are filled with a great desire to catch the fish, but because the *Val upas* had not given the word to do so, they would curb their desire and never disobey their elders.

To prevent the fish from escaping downstream, young men were assigned to guard the blockades – four or five to each blockade. The young men would cast their nets near the bamboo lattices, and it could be said that they never failed to make a catch; and the words of Pu Rokunga song: “Vala cast his net and caught some more,” came true every time they cast their nets.

The air was filled with the din of many people catching and bagging fish all along the course of the stream between the first and last blockades. The old folks say that it was during this joyful and jubilant part of the ‘sa-ngha tlang vuak,’ when they were so happy and so engrossed in the task of catching fish that at that stage, “It was possible to forget even their sweethearts!” The uncountable number of fishes were tossed or thrown onto both banks of the river to be picked up and gathered later on.

On those occasions, partaking of dinner afforded great pleasure, so much so that it was indelibly imprinted and fixed in the mind for many years. Those who took part in the ‘Sa-ngha tlang vuak,’ could never say enough about the delicious and sumptuous meal. It formed an inexhaustible topic of conversation. The choice of fish was made and then it was and chopped in halves. These were then boiled in an enormous pot.

When they prepared the feast and spread plantain leaves on the bank of the stream, the snowy white piles of new cooked rice was also a wonderful spectacle which made the mouth water. When they sat down to eat in groups of tens, the young men who were tired and hungry ate heartily, without reluctance and without grudging any one whatsoever. The piles of rice crumbled like landslides and diminished in no time.

The elders would keep on encouraging the youngsters to eat voraciously. They would say, “Don’t be gentle or careful. Leather doesn’t and cannot break,” which meant, “Don’t stand on custom, convention, proprieties or formalities. Eat as much as you want. Your stomachs won’t break or burst!” There were no restrictions during the sumptuous meal and they all ate till they were full, satisfied, and satiated.

After they had dined, the youngsters would clean and tidy the place and wash the pots and spoons and ladles; while others busied themselves with the heavy task of disemboweling the fish they had caught. The number of persons who took part in fishing was usually about seventy to one hundred, so it

was a large catch of various kinds of fish. It was not possible to take the catch home fresh, because most of it would decompose or purify before they reached their village. After dinner some of them would grope for more stupefied fish in the stream; while others fetched dry firewood to make a big fires over which they intended to smoke and dry the fish that had been disemboweled. They made 'tah-rang' that is, lattice work made of split bamboos plaited together and crossing one another at right angles. The 'tah-rangs' were placed over two or three fires, and the fish were placed on the 'tah-rangs' to be smoked and dried. When they were dry, they were taken off and each fish was put on like this.

The fire had to be kept burning, and they had to be very careful and attentive to see that the flames did not burn the 'tah-rangs' or the fish to a cinder. Some slept and others took turns at watching; but the more altruistic among them kept up the whole night. To keep them wide awake, the elocutionists, the rhetoricians and the scintillating conversationists produced their repertoire of interesting legends, tales and anecdotes. Without neglecting the fires and the fish, the young men took part in the conversation with comments and rejoinders; and now and then, peels of laughter rang out in the still night air and startled the nocturnal birds, rodents and insects. Time quickly ushered in a new day.

The dried fish was accumulated and piled up in one place; and when it was time to go home, the 'Val upas' distributed it. Each person spread a banana leaf and marked it by embedding and fixing a spear near the leaf. The 'Val upas' never looked up to see who the owners were. They looked only at the spears and the banana leaves and distributed the shares briskly. Nowadays we have balances and scales to make shares even and equal. In those days, the shares may not have been equal; but no one was discontented and they all accepted the lots made by the 'Val upas.' They had plaited baskets to put their shares in, and they packed their shares in their baskets and soon they were homeward bound, as happy as kings, chatting gaily and volubly all the way.

The chiefs family, who did not take part in the fishing trip and even the widows who were unable to participate, were not forgotten, nor were they omitted, for they were all given a share of the catch. It was a beautiful and exemplary Mizo way of life. The families of those who went fishing met them at the entrance of the village and hadtily relieved them of their burdens. Tired, but happy, they reached and entered their respective homes.

After they had gone home the effect of the herbal poison in the stream continued to stupefy the fish between the blockades and also down-stream below the last blockade. The stupefied fish were known as ‘ngha dah’ meaning ‘deposited fish.’ Any and everybody was allowed to catch them. If the effect of the herbal toxin was a slow kind, it stupefied the fishes for quite a distance down stream; and sometimes those who caught these fishes were more successful than the ‘sa-ngha tlang vuak’ group!

After a few days the effects of the herbal toxin in the stream dismissed and ceased altogether. So the majority of the fish did not suffer its effects. The water flowing down from upstream and from its source diluted and poison, and soon the polluted water became pure again; and in no time, before you could say, ‘Jack Robinson!’ the stream was teeming with fishes; for according to nature fish propagate and multiply at a rapid rate.

Long ago, in Mizoram, the rivers and streams were full of various kinds of fishes and there was a plentitude of the choicest and most tasty and most palatable kinds. The rivers in the land contained more than a sufficient amount to supply the needs of the children of Mizo that dwelt in the beautiful, pleasant land of Mizoram.

17. LIFE OF THE YOUNG MEN AND MAIDENS

If we took a careful, assiduous and calculating view of the life of Mizo youths of long ago, though the life they led was simple and of a low standard: with wonder, awe and astonishment, we would realize and have to admit they understood and caught on to the meaning and purpose of life, more than we who are more advanced and civilized. In their daily life, when they did strenuous and tiresome work together; when they associated and had fellowship with one another and when they were courting: the way they paid deference to each other; the way they minded and heeded each other and the way they admired and appreciated each other is truly great and worth emulating. We will not be able to discuss every department or facet of their lives; so let us take a view of the way they worked together and helped each other by turns, and the way they paid court to each other. For our modern youths it will be a good mirror which we could look at to compare ourselves with the Mizo youths of bygone days.

We, Mizo are a people who take turns in helping each other. When we confront toilsome, laborious or tedious work, we work together and help each other happily till the task is completed. Incidentally, it is useful for those who are looking for a husband or a wife. When the damsels and young men helped each other in turns, the courtesy, affability, complaisance and good manners they practiced even during meals and when they worked together are worth learning and emulating.

When they helped each other, sometimes it was one number each from two families, or it could be one member each from four or five families. Each day they worked in a different jhoom and helped each other in rotation. In the morning, before they left the village, the boys had to split wood and the girls had to pound

paddy and cook the morning meal and do other chores in the house, such as sweeping, fetching water from the spring or water hole, and washing etc. The groups waited till their members were complete; and each of them was reluctant and afraid to be late in arriving at the meeting place; so they helped each other in their chores as briskly as they could.

At the exit or entrance to the village, the young lady would take the lunch packets of the young men, and put it in her basket intending to carry it all the way to the jhoom. She would also grab the hoes and other jhoom work implements with the intention of carrying them herself; but the young men would make a stand and exert themselves and make an effort to stop her from doing so. The battle of diligence, assiduousness and Mizo Tlawmngaihna would ensue and go on till the young lady succeeded in putting the jhoom work paraphernalia into her basket, and they would all set off of their way to the jhoom.

When they reached the hut in the jhoom, the young lady had no time to sit or be idle. She attended to whatever was necessary and swept the floor. After they had rested for a reasonable period, one by one they left the hut to start the work of weeding. If any of the young men were slothful and shiftless and took their own sweet time and were belated in leaving the hut, they were regarded as indolent and not worth inviting the hut, they were and taking turns at helping each other. Young men of that sort were generally overlooked and not invited and were seldom included in the 'Inlawm' group that helped each other in rotation.

When they started weeding or harvesting, the young men would put forth their best efforts. While they worked strenuously and briskly, they would make the rhythmic sound made by Mizo carrying heavy loads or when weeding a jhoom; 'Heih, heih, heih heih ha!' They worked briskly and continuously till lunch time, when they took a recess for lunch. Sometimes while they were working it would rain heavily, the owner of the jhoom would suggest resting in the hut during the shower; but the young men would say, 'Lets not run away. Its our usual custom to resist rain and enemies.' Our old folks had a maxim: 'When the sun is hot,

we are cotton gins; when it rains we are crabs.’ So saying, the young men would work harder and faster. While weeding, if they came across any water-melons or cucumbers they would never eat them until the owner told them to do so; and even then they would make a show of reluctance and say, “I don’t feel like it,” or “I have no desire to do so.” Ultimately with great difficulty, the owner of the jhoom would manage to cajole them to eat the water-melon or cucumber.

As a sign to indicate lunch time, other ‘Inalwm’ groups working in other jhooms would shout ‘Halloa!’ ‘Coo-ey!’ Mizo usually shot ‘cook’ and some would even emit the scream of a gibbon, while others used to beat a ‘talh-kuang’ (three wooden trough drums of different size joined together. The young men and young ladies would ignore the calls and go on working. The calls did not disturb their minds or their work, and it seemed that they had no desire to stop work or to take rest. Eventually, when they took a rest at lunch time, the aim and object of each of them would be, ‘Let the others eat as much as they can. I need just enough food to sustain myself.’ If they were served with meat or crab, they would toss it back. Like a game of basket ball or tennis, the chunk or piece of meat or crab would go back and forth till at last someone accepted the choice crab or lump of meat, and ate it reluctantly.

Though they worked diligently and toilsomely, sometimes while they were weeding, one of them would find an insect called a ‘Zawl-zawng’ (seeker of future mate). It is a species of locust or cricket, and had a flat brow as if a part of its head had been cut off. They would capture the ‘Zawl-zawng.’ And one of them would hold it in his or her hand, while they all sang or chanted the following song:

*Seeker of future mate, go
Don't meet with a king crow,
Land on my love's hair, hang thereon-go!*

The person who was holding the ‘Zawl-zawng’ would set it free; and they would all watch with interest and abated breath, to

see where it landed. If it flew across the ravine, they believed that the one who was practicing the augury would marry a husband or wife from another village. If it did not cross the ravine and came to rest on a leaf of a bush or the leaf of a paddy plant, it was their opinion that the future mate was to be someone living in their own village. Most of all, they wanted it to land or come to rest on the leaf of a paddy plant. If it landed on a paddy plant, it was their notion that in the future they were going to be prosperous and rich in paddy and vegetables. Unfortunately, if during its flight, the 'Zawl-zawng' was caught and devoured by a king crow or any other bird, it meant that the one practicing the augury would be bereft of the future wife or husband and mourn the loss thereof. They did not like that kind of augury. While they did their strenuous and toilsome work, they devised, contrived and thought up ways and means of relaxing and taking their minds off their work now and then for a few moments, to laugh and smile and make merry.

When they went to work in a jhoom and a young lady was the owner, sometimes it happened that the boyfriend was not included among the boys who were helping her on that particular day. In the afternoon, when the sun had passed the meridian, the girl plucked the greens and vegetables in her jhoom, to take home, for her family and for the boys who were helping her. She packed them in different sizes according to the size of their families. Later on when it was time to give watch to the thirsty boys who were weeding her jhoom she would fetch water from the bottom of the gully or ravine. On her way to fetch water she would sing softly:

*Wielding hoes with my fellow workers,
Not included – my bean is not here;
Courteously I'll dupe those who are here,
Though in my heart I love another.*

From above song we can deduce that in those days young ladies did not always invite their boyfriends to participate in the group that helped each other in rotation; and that the girls and boys who were in love did not always work together; and also that a young lady was polite and courteous towards all the young men without bias, discrimination, partiality or prejudice.

In the evening, when it was time to go home, and the workers who were working in far distant jhooms began to coo-ey to indicate that they were on their way home; those who were still weeding, would ignore the calls and go on working steadily. Even when those who were going home early came into sight, winding their way through the jhoom where they were working, they pretended as if they did not see them and never showed any sign that they desired to go home. It did not disturb their work in any way.

If inadvertently they went home earlier than was usual, they would not coo-ey or make a noise, lest a widower who lived all alone and had invited some young men to help him in his jhoom were still busy. They did not want to disturb those who were still working. They did not want to show excitement in the minds of the young men who were helping the widower; nor did they want to plant an embryo of desire in their minds, to stop work and go home. They were considerate and tactful.

When an 'Inlawm' group was ready to go home, they collected all the hoes and hooked or hung them together on one hoe. The person holding the handle of the hoe on which all the other hoes were hooked together would swing his arm backward and forward like a pendulum; and at the maximum point of a forward swing, he would let go the handle, and all the hoes would soar through the air and fall in different places and positions. Then they would check to see where the hoes had fallen. It was another method of augury practiced by them. The owner of the hoe that fell closest would be married first and so on; and the owner of the hoe that fell farthest or farthestmost would be the last among them to get married. This game was invented by their forebears for amusement, diversion, relaxation, recreation and merriment. Thus the air around them would be filled with the sound of augury, laughter and mirth.

After working strenuously and assiduously the whole day, some of them became tired and weary, and they would sing a song to indicate that they wished to finish the remaining work as soon as possible. The diligence and perseverance of the owner of the jhoom and the young man who was helping her were not

usually the same. There is a 'Tlangnuam' song which goes like this:

*Our work before us is wide and vast,
Oh, so wide and vast, wide and vast;
We'll be late to go home and we'll be the last,
Co-worker, work fast, my tender laps.*

When it was time to return home from the jhooms, the woodpecker would emit its peculiar call. Using that as an excuse to stop work and go home, a young man would sing the following song employing the 'Thlangzai' tune:

*Woodpeckers cry not in vain, they say,
Witless co-worker, let's call it a day.*

And the following response denotes the inclination and bend the mind of the owner of the jhoom:

*Of the time, I'm not oblivious,
Let the young man over there call us,
Hui hui hui.*

Sometimes the presence of the girl were pleased with the hardworking efforts of the boys who were helping her in rotation. They would hold a beer drink of honour of the young men. The girl's father would say, "Lassie, on account of us your colleagues are fatigued. Let's treat them to a pot of zu. They're exactly the sort of workers we wish to employ for weeding. Are your co-workers good in dancing? Sing a song for them, and let's find out their ability and aptitude in dancing."

When parents who were wise and quick of understanding gave the young men a treat, and praised, commended and eulogized them, they were so pleased, their faces would light up with smiles. They would become so restive that they would spring up to dance. While dancing they would compose and sing a song heartily using the 'Awi maw zai' tune such as the following:

*Officers and soldiers on the parade ground,
Marching of feet, sound - Awi maw!
Marching of feet, sound - Awi maw!
It makes me so pensive - Awi maw!*

*Are you the Sailo chief Lalzuala - Awi maw,
 From your zu pot we are going to drink nectar;
 Do I have to salute you?
 Longevity to you! - Awi maw.*

*In the steps of Pi Hmuaki of old, awi maw,
 Like a little cicada, songs I compose;
 They'll bury me for real - awi maw,
 Premature burial! - awi maw.*

The present generation will not be able to fathom, measure or understand the merriment and pleasure derived and enjoyed by those youths of long ago. Sometimes a boy and a girl worked together and helped each other alternately for many years. Some of those coupled enjoyed each others company hoping to get married. There is a couplet composed by a young man, and it is as follows:

*Till I've beaten nine through drums away,
 We'll work together, come what may!*

After dinner, all the young men would go to the 'Zawlbuk' (Bachelors' dormitory), where they usually slept together every night. At about 7 p.m. it was visiting time, and they would set out from the 'Zawlbuk' to visit, court, woo or pay suit to the various young ladies, damsels or village belles; or to their particular or specific girl friends.

After they had dined, the young ladies also, would wash the platters, bowls, spoons and ladles, and the cooking utensils. They would add fuel to the fire and put the big brass pot of pigs food on the fire to boil. Then they would sweep the floor and spruce and groom themselves to be prim, prink and sleek. After that they would take a spindle and place it in front of them and sit on the floor and lean against a bed post. The bed posts were made of large bamboos, and it was the main or chief bed (Khumpui), on which their parents slept. The post they leaned against had a hole big enough to let a man put his hand through; to put in or take out trinkets and other small valuables that were deposited in the hollow of the bamboo bed post. This ancient Mizo safe and

bed post was known as 'Tung-chaw.' A young lady would lean against the 'Tung-chaw' and conscientiously spin cotton. She would be ready for the young men who were coming to 'rim' that is, to court or visit her or to be in her company.

When the visiting young men entered her house, to overcome, their shyness and to break the ice, the girls parents would receive and greet them with appropriate words, and start a conversation to put the young men at ease. Those who felt quiet at home would sit near the outer bed, or around the post inside the house which supported the rigg pole. Some would sit in the light provided by the fire on the hearth, and some would sit farther back in its half light. Those who felt more at home would step up on the raised floor and sit close to the outer bed, not far from the hearth.

The young lady would stand and greet her visitors and enquire if they would like to light their pipes. Mizo smoked home-made pipes, made of a hard and durable bamboo. The head or bowl was made of 'Tur-sing' bamboo root. The little hostess would take burning coals from the fire and distribute them one by one, by putting a piece on the tobacco in the pipes of her visitors. She would blow the ash away to make sure that each burning coal was glowing before she put them in the bowls. If she put a dying ember, without blowing the ash away, into a bowl, they would say, "She is doling out a fire that is not ripe!"

The way she put glowing pieces of coals, or dying embers in the pipe bowls, indicated whether she favoured the young man or not; and whether she was infatuated with him or not. For those whom she did not favour, she put hot glowing coal in the bowls and the tobacco pipe was lighted immediately. On the other hand, for those whom she was infatuated with, she put dying embers covered with ash in their pipe lighted and she had an excuse to go back and forth frequently, and be near the young man she favoured.

The parents of the young lady would regard it as improper and impolite to sit up with their daughter and her young men. Though they were not feeling sleepy, they would retire and on

their bed. They would prick up their ears and listen or eavesdrop on the conversation that was going on. Sometimes they would fall into a dog-sleep. It was then that the boys would dare to broach and discuss various topics. Those who were sitting in the half-light would also move forward and sit closer to the girl. They would tease her to see whether she was dexterous, skillful, adept and agile; or whether she was inept or clumsy.

On the other hand, the young lady would do her best to hide her personality. She would laugh at their jokes, and smile even when she did not feel like it. She would endeavour to appear graceful, able, competent, efficient and skillful. If she had any, arum bulbs, yam or maize, she would boil it and serve it to the boys. Sometimes she made rice flour into dough, wrapped it in banana leaves and boiled it. She would then serve it hot to her visitors.

To pollute the air or out gas, or-excuse the smut – fart in company, was impolite, improper and uncouth; so the young lady would do her best to retain it. Among the Mizo it was regarded as one of the most shameful thing to let out gas audible or with a loud report in the company of others. Even if the damsel inadvertently did so, the young men would pretend not to know it; and they would go on chatting in an unconcerned manner – to hide and cover her feeling of shame. There is couplet which is as follows:

*Little damsel, your behind like a cock crows,
I tolerate the fumes with my nose!*

It was difficult to know the beau of a virtuous young lady, because she was very careful in hiding the fact. Though many young men were courting her, she was impartial and treated them all in the same way. She would always put her spindle between her and the youngmen who positioned themselves close to her. It must have been very difficult for the girls to hide their feelings; for there is a song which uncovers and reveals their minds:

*Adding fuel to the fire in the heart,
Her eyes sought for the face of her sweetheart.*

A charming, courteous young lady who was sagacious and sociable was highly esteemed and admired. Even middle aged married men would visit her during visiting time to enjoy the pleasure of her company. Another point which needs to be clarified, is that she may not necessarily be a young lady, a maiden, a damsel or a virgin. She could also be a widowed or discovered young women in the prime of life (nu-va-lai), and she may have been a young unmarried woman who has been a mother. Such a charming young women would attract many admirers and every evening her house would be full of Mizo men and young men of different tribes and clans.

A young man who arrived late would have to sit near the outer wall, beside a bin of pig's feed with a ladle sticking out of the bin. He would also have to extend his legs through an exit or entrance made specially for dogs; and he would realize that his legs were resting on the neck of a goat which was hitched outside the house! This comic or humorous situation is depicted in an ancient Mizo song:

*There's no room in your house, my sweet,
I turn my head – the pig's fed ladle pokes my cheek!
My legs stretched through the dog's exit, rest on your
goat's neck!!*

When the young lady had many admirers and visitors, her parents would even go to the extent of counting them. Sometimes it was the young men who surreptitiously counted the visitors. They counted the Mizo sub-clans represented to see if there were ten sub-clans. For example, if there were thirty visitors, they counted the number of sun-clans represented such as – Chhakchhuak, Chhange, Chawngthu etc. If there were ten different sub-clans among the visitors, the girl's parents were obliged to bring out a pot of zu and treat all the visitors, to celebrate the achievement of their daughter. No matter how great the number of visitors were, and even if they filled the whole house, if there were less than ten sub-clans represented, there could be no beer drink. If a young lady had visitors, admirers, wooers and idolizers from ten different sub-clans, it was regarded as a great honour

to her parents. It also brought fame, renown and a good reputation for her.

Sometimes a young man visited his girl friend alone, and he had a golden opportunity to be alone with his 'Mary Brown.' They would sit late into the night and he would start caressing, or fondling her. Not being able to control himself, he would go beyond the rules of propriety. Actually they were not alone. The girl was leaning against the 'Tungchaw' – it was also a bed post. On that bed the girl's parents would be lying awake; and they could see and hear what was going on.

To show their presence, and to signify that their minds were not at ease, as a reprimand or warning they would raise their heads and spit out a stream of tobacco juice (liquid snuff) onto the floor at the head of the bed. Sometimes they would cough so as to clear the throat. It was in that way that Mizo parents of long ago would chaperon, safe-guard and watch over their daughters. They would disallow, interdict, restrain and control any improper actions that ensued between their daughter and her beau.

In those days there were no clocks or watches, so they depended on the rooster. When the cock crowed late in the evening, it was called 'leng hawn ar khuan.' It was the signal for all young men to leave their sweethearts' home and go to bed. Sometimes, some men with a sense of humour, would return early to the Zawlbuk, where all the bachelors in the village slept together. Those young men would flap their cloths and imitate or mimic the crowing of a rooster, and set all the cocks in the village crowing!

When the 'leng hawn' cock crowed, the young lady would say that it was merely the 'thut muan ar' which signified that they could sit leisurely, take things quietly and linger and loiter. She would restrain them from leaving and request them politely to linger awhile.

Sometimes a lazy, worthless, improper, ill-mannered young man would fall asleep in the young lady's house. She would neither wake him nor be offended. When he woke up on his own accord

and intended to leave, she would restrain him by saying, "The night is still young, stay and visit awhile." And if he made up his mind to go home, she would politely see him off with appropriate leave taking expressions.

In these and other ways, Mizo young men and maidens of long ago enjoyed a wide range and full swing of freedom and liberty in their fellowship with each other. Though they fraternised, hobnobbed and mingled freely; and though a young man and a young lady worked together and kept each others company for three long years, they did so without ignominy, obliquy or disgrace. It is our bounden duty and we are obliged and cannot help but admire and esteem them and have a high opinion of them.

18. MIZO MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

Our progenitors of long ago had proper well-defined rules and customs of looking for and taking a bride. Though there were improper ways of being married such as: A young lady entering and living in a man's house without ceremony (luh-khung); a man entering a lady's house to live with her (fan); marrying without previous inter-course, intimacy, fellowship or knowledge of each other (tawn-sa-bawpa innei); simple, easy wedlock without previous arrangements, rules or customs (riah-buk thing fawm) and elopement (tlan-dun), we are going to take a view of the usual, typical, customary way of marriage practiced by the majority of the Mizo before they converted to Christianity.

In their search and choice of a husband or wife, our forefathers were particular, careful and circumspect. They went so far as to trace the ancestors of the person in question as far back as possible. What they wanted was a person from a longevous family; a family blessed with prosperity and the horn of plenty and was diligent and gentle; a person of a good family with a good mode and manner of living; one who was skillful in weaving; a brave warrior or hunter; a person who was adventurous in exploring the jungle and fond of outdoor life; and a person of good health.

They would not choose a person who was of a family in which unnatural death occurred or had occurred, a person who was a family known to be kleptomaniac; a person who possessed an evil spirit or evil eye; a family in which a person was affected with infirmity, malformation and distortion; or a person chronically deformed, maimed or was from a family of crippled freaks; a family in which a person was subject to epileptic fits; a family in which a person suffered consumption or any chronic wasting disease; a family in which women died in child birth and a family

of gossiping, talkative, garrulous persons, given to divulging secrets and spreading information. These sorts of persons were passed over, left out and omitted in their quest for a husband or wife.

The tracing and checking of the genealogy, bloodline, family tree and heredity was vital and necessary for the offsprings of those who were to be joined in wedlock. In Mizo proverbs, it is said and we learn that:

*From the emblic myrobalan fruit tree
you cannot pluck any other fruit.*

A blotched, mottled, spotted mithun gives birth to a blotched, mottled, spotted mithun; and a ferocious wild animal gives birth to a ferocious wild animal.

If the pod of the 'kawi' bean is good, the fruit is good, but if the pod is bad, the fruit is also bad.

There way of teaching, leading or initiating others in the duties of life of finding good and perfect life partner was quite mature. Besides, as far as possible, they tried to find a daughter-in-law who was of the same brotherhood, clan or confederation of clans as themselves. A girl who could sit down and partake of the flesh of the 'inthawi' sacrifice with them. The reason for this was that there was a dreaded evil spirit which inhabited the lower region of the under-world to which they had to offer a sacrifice to appease it. The owner of a sow was not allowed to kill it unless he offered it to that spirit. The spirit and the sacrifice offered were both given the same appellant 'Hnuai-pui.' When the spirit was offended a sow which had had three litters or piglets had to be offered to satisfy the spirit; and even then, it was said that he killed and carried away three human beings before he was appeased.

They also had a class of sacrifices which were called 'khal.' There were many, but the original 'Khals' were collectively called 'Khal tluang.' The principal units of which were as follows: Khalpui, Khal chung, Khal chuam, Kel khal, Ar khal, Arpui hang khal, Vawkte khal, Van chung khal, Hmar khal, Lasi Khal and Sa khal.

If their daughter-in-law was of a different clan, it was taboo for her to partake of the sacrificial flesh of the ‘Hnuai pui’ pork and the ‘Kel khal’ mutton. In such a predicament, it was embarrassing for their daughter-in-law, because they had to cheat and deceive the evil spirit; they said, “She is unworthy of notice. She’s only a bitch – a contemptible pariah dog – come and sit and eat, you bitch!” To avoid that embarrassing situation; perseveringly, in spite of difficulties, they did their best to find a daughter-in-law or bride who was able to partake of the sacrificial flesh without having to deceive, cheat or bluff the evil spirit.

In Chapter 17, we mentioned that a boy would help and work together with a girl for three years, to find out all about her character and personality. And then, with the agreement of his parents they would send a representative to the girls parents to discuss and negotiate a marriage. This sort of negotiation was called ‘lungvar,’ meaning a pure, perfect white stone regarding the bride to be; and on the bridegroom’s side it could mean that their minds were enlightened and set at ease. The old folks used to say, “When a couple was surely, truly and actually joined together by a ‘white stone’ negotiation, there was unity and oneness. And besides, their offsprings were sought after and followed by blessings and prosperity.” When a young man went to another village to search for a bride on the quite; the reconnaissance was called ‘ran ngo zawng’ which means ‘Quest for a white domestic animal,’ or ‘a search for Miss Perfect.’

If a young lady had many admirer, the parents would seek her advice, if she answered, marry him yourself if you want to,” it meant that she did not agree to the proposal of marriage. If her answer was, “Do as you wish according to your pleasure and command,” it meant that she agreed.

In olden days weddings, the price of the bride was efficacious and of vital importance. Since Mizo paid a price for the bride, the agreement or disagreement of a marriage depended a lot on the price. Generally, the price of a bride who brought a dowry along with her was as follows:

A chief's daughter etc.	-	10 mithuns
Pachauau clan	-	7 mithuns
Lusei clan	-	5 mithuns
Aliens speaking other dialects	-	4 mithuns

The above is the norm and may not be the same all over Mizoram, but it was used by the majority. And besides, they did not give the exact price. Depending on the something in lieu of part of the price. For instance:

Long, long ago, when the Chuauhangs were the ruling clan among some of Mizo tribe, in a village situated on the Tiau river, there lived an agile, brave, daring, friendly, gorgeous, handsome but impecunious youth named Chawng-fianga. He was the son of a widow of the common class in the society.

One day, the chief's daughter Lianchhari fell in love with him. Then Lianchhari used various ways, means and wiles to get her father to employ Chawngfianga, so that she could be near him and have him for herself. Due to her shameful infatuation which she could not control, Chawngfianga and his widowed mother were emboldened to send a representative to the chief to negotiate and arrange a wedding between the chief's daughter and the widow's son.

Condescendingly the emissary broached the subject and humbly explained that they could pay only a fraction of the stipulated price which was equivalent to ten mithuns. Liachhari's parents were well aware of the fact that their daughter wished to marry Chawngfianga, so the chief's reply to the go-between (palai) was as follows:

"Well if that is all you can afford, I guess we'll just have to accept one broken axe in lieu of one mithun; one old used hoe in lieu of a half a mithun; and a hen and its brood of chickens in lieu of a female mithun and her calf, equivalent to one and a half mithuns. And if that doesn't add up to the stipulated price, we shall accept another small chicken in lieu of one mithun, and so on. I'm sure you'll be able to afford the wedding price of ten mithuns."

From the above account and incident, it is as clear as crystal that the bride's side accepted something of little or no value in lieu of a mithun. We have learned from Mizo history that a litigant had to pay a court fee of five rupees, and that five rupees was the price of a sow. We also know from ancient Mizo lullaby that the price of a chief's daughter 'Chhingi' was 300 rupees.

Though the bride's parents accepted something in lieu of the mithuns, the full wedding price or the balance was regarded as a debt. If the bridegroom and his wife had to pay it in dribs and drabs or installments, some couples were unable to settle the wedding debt during their whole life time.

Money was scarce at that time, and any amount over one hundred rupees was regarded as a fabulous sum of money. However, for the young men, earning and saving money to pay for a bride was a formidable undertaking. It occupied and filled their minds with worry, anxiety and care till it became their hearts desire. They toiled and worked hard to earn it. Let us take general view of three conspicuous, outstanding and prominent ways in which they earned money to obtain a wedding price.

(i) In their childhood, when they became big boys and during their adolescence, they would work as herdsmen and look after the mithuns of a well to do person in their village. After working for three years, in payment for their work, their employer gave them a two year old calf.

(ii) To earn money for a bride, the young men would go on a long journey to a place where there were salt springs. They would evaporate the salt water to obtain salt. Then they would sell the salt and save the money. We find the following words in an old song:

*To earn money to pay for a bride,
My home has no necklace or gong inside,
Salt springs on the horizon – I must decide.*

(iii) There were indigenous rubber trees growing in Mizoram, and young men would collect the sap and exchange it for salt. They

would save the salt to obtain the price for a wife. There is a song which was composed as follows:

*Like brass from a branch it oozed out,
While earning price of my sweetheart,
Like a caged parrot I pace about!*

There is a song about this period which depicts the great love between a young man and his lady; and because of his poverty he felt that he would never be able to marry her:

*I need much money in my poor state,
I shall not wed my heart's desire at this rate,
It's all because I am in dire strait!*

He burst out in despair.

Due to this situation and predicament, there were many who could not settle the wedding price and incurred debts. And since the responsibility was placed mostly upon the parents, they often forced their daughters to marry a person that offered the highest price. We have heard of many brides who wept and shed many tears on their wedding day. They were forced against their will by their parents. They were married in haste and repented in leisure. There is a song which seems to reveal their minds in such a situation:

*Mother, I married in discontent,
Under flow'ry tuahpui and vau trees I went –
Met my love – my eyes to tears gave vent!*

There were two ways in which our forefathers concluded, determined, fixed and settled a betrothal or engagement. The first way was as follows: When a son of a well-to-do person went to another village to seek and choose a wife, and if he was a virtuous, honourable and ethical young man; if it was clearly understood that he and the girl he choose were attracted towards each other and willing, the girl's father would put two bamboo tubes in a pot of beer and allow them to suck beer simultaneously from the same pot. In Mizo this was called 'Khawn-thiang a khawntir.' It signified that the girl and boy were engaged and betrothed and

that there was no shadow of doubt that they would be married. Youngmen who were affianced in this way and sucked beer together with their betrothed, were those who could be proud of themselves. They could be self-complacent, self-satisfied, smug and consequential, due to their position on the high rungs of the social ladder. They were the only ones who could obtain that sort of engagement. This custom was not practiced in one's own village.

The second way of clinching an engagement was as follows: Suppose a young man wanted to marry a young lady, and she, with the consent of her mother accepted his proposal; but due to any reason or circumstance, if he was unable to start negotiations and preparations for the wedding, and yet they remain together with her mother's blessing and consent, it was regarded as a firm betrothal. In Mizo this clinching of an engagement was known as 'Zawl-puan-phan' (spreading the dark blue cloth).

The girl's mother spread a 'Zawlpuan' cloth or sheet flat on the floor at the head of the inner or main bed (khumpui); and the girl and boy would sleep together intimately on the Zawlpuan. The spreading of the Zawlpuan took place only during the day, and not at night. The sleeping together of the girl and boy on the Zawlpuan signified that they were engaged and would be married. The boy had to send a go-between and arrange a wedding at the earliest convenience. If he did not marry the girl, he was obliged to pay the 'Zawlpuan phah' fine without gainsaying, murmuring or raising any objections whatsoever. The fine was equivalent to one female mithun. This custom of clinching an engagement was practiced by widows only.

Young men who were heirs to chieftainships used to examine and check the girls they intended to marry. They could be placed in the same category as a king of a modern civilized country, who it is said checked to see if the bride he had chosen was a virgin. In the same way, the girl who was going to the wife of a Mizo chief was examined and scrutinized carefully to prove and verify the fact that she did not have a secret deformity, defect,

blemish, malformation (which olden days Mizo believed that it was caused by her mother or father during the mother's pregnancy); or that she did not have a permanent scar anywhere on her body. She was literally put under a magnifying glass. They believed that those effects are hereditary and would appear on their offsprings; so it was imperative for them to verify that the future wife of a chief had no blemish whatsoever.

The mother of the girl in question put up a temporary screen round the bed, or on the back verandah (bah-zar), so that only the head of the girl could be seen. She wore only a short skirt. After a careful scrutiny from head to toes, if they found no defective, faulty or objectional blemish on her, they would commence preparations for the wedding.

The wedding customs of the common folks was as follows: When the go-between had broached, discussed and concluded the negotiations, the date for the wedding was set and fixed. It was called 'In-sawi ni,' meaning the day they talked it over. Both sides arranged a get together of family members, faithful friends and neighbours. They would drink zu, joke and discuss various topics, especially the forthcoming matrimony. Those who were to receive a part or share of the wedding price were bound to bring a chicken which was to be taken with them. They conducted the bride to the bridegroom's house. The person who had the greatest authority among them was the bride's maternal grandfather. He was very important, so much so that without his presence or participation, the matrimonial ceremony could not be performed.

The representatives would go to the bride's house taking with them the stipulated sum of money which had been agreed upon. When they reached the girl's house, those on the girl's side who were of a friendly and sociable disposition would say, "Now, the honeycomb which we have taken out of a hollow tree seems to be good. So let's drink a toast with zu." So saying, they would give the bridegroom's representatives zu to drink. With a great show of happiness and goodwill they would do their best to make

their visitors feel at home. Meekly and humbly, the representatives would say, "Here you are, besides all we possess, we borrow money from our close friends and relatives and also sold our pig. As for the rest of the price, we have brought some things in lieu of the balance. We have simply come before you and humbly hope that parents and grand-parents such as you will endeavour to come to an agreement without making our heads swim and causing us worry and anxiety. Then from under the cloth gird round the waist, one of them would produce the coins bundled in an old piece of cloth, and empty it all into a bamboo tray used for sifting and winnowing grain. The girl's maternal grandfather would count the money while all the other paid close attention and watched. The subsidiary portions of the girl's price were placed in separate piles; and they would demand to see the utensils and other valuable possessions which they had already agreed upon in lieu of the rest of the price. The go-between of the boys side had brought some of those things and they would go home and bring some more valuable things. The girl's side would find fault with the things they brought and would try to bring down the value of those things. The boy's side would make a stand and after arguing and bargaining for a long time; and after the boy's side had gone back and forth between the groom's house and the bride's two or three times; ultimately, with great difficulty, they would reach an agreement.

Sometimes due to disagreement regarding the value of the possessions brought in lieu of the balance of the wedding price and the demand for more money, the wedding was desisted, terminated and put off entirely; but it happened only on rare occasions.

After they had reached an agreement regarding the wedding and fixed the price of the bride and it was accepted, the brides side killed a pig for the conducting of the bride to the bridegroom's house. One half of the hog and the head was apportioned to the bridegroom's side. On the first night the bride was conducted accompanied, escorted and ushered to the groom's house, young

men who were lively, jovial and fond of playing pranks together with many children would way lay the bride and her convoy, and bespatter her with mud and cast ashes on her. The girls side would appoint a man who was brave and strong, and was really fond of the girl's family, to be their 'Lawi-chal.' He would accompany the bride to the bridegrooms house, and if necessary he protected her from being bespattered with mud on the way. He would be armed with a long bamboo staff or stave, and he would shout and repeat the following words as they proceeded towards the bridegroom's house, "I am conducting sons and daughters to the bridegroom's house! He would also wield, brandish, wave and flourish his stave and force a way through the pranksters. If anyone was hurt or wounded, it was unlawful for them to resent it or take offence.

The bride would cling and hold onto the brides maid. If she inadvertently fell down on the way, they had to return back to her house, and sometimes the wedding was put off for good. It would also be terminated if they did not pay the 'Lawi-chal', the price he demanded for escorting and protecting her.

When they succeeded in conducting the bride to the bridegroom's house, she and the groom would sit side by side on the main or inner bed (khum-pui). Then, in a nice, clean, particular place, the priest (Sa-dawt) of their family or clan would put a pot of zu before them and intonate and recite an incantation. They would suck the zu together from the same pot, using two bamboo tubes (khawn-thiang). While they were sucking the zu, the priest would take the ends of three or five strands each of their hair and tie the ends in a knot. After unfastening or loosening the knot, he took two domestic fowls and gripped the four legs in one hand and chanted the following words (suppose the names of the bridegroom and bride were Liana and Remi):

*May the nuptial of young Liana and Remi,
Be as firm as a rock in a plain,
May they age like the mango tree
and wither and shrivel
like the sago palm;*

*May they propagate and bear many offsprings,
May they receive blessings of all sort and of everything,
In the village of their kinsfolk,
Let their family grow, expand and branch out,
In all directions like a great banyan tree.*

So saying, he would strike the backs of two chickens with a bamboo or wooden rice stirrer which was being utilized at that time. And so, the marriage would be solemnized.

The killing of the two chickens was known as ‘Rem ar’ meaning agreement chickens; and it sealed the wedding agreement. Regarding the benediction and blessing of the wedded couple, the killing and offering of the two chickens was also known as ‘Arzang-tuak’ (two fowls sacrificed at a wedding). After they had performed that ceremony the wedded couple were regarded as man and wife. And even if they had not slept together, if one of them revolted and revoked the agreement, their separation was considered precisely, specifically and definitely as a divorce, and it would be ruled as such. Furthermore, the rice stirrer which was used to kill and offer the two chickens as a sacrifice had to be one that was being utilized in that house at that time. Using a brand new or any other rice stirrer was unclean, unlawful and forbidden.

On the first night of the wedding, the bride would return to her parents house. The next night she was conducted to the groom’s house for the second time. On that occasion, she took all her possessions with her and she would sleep in the groom’s house. The second time was called, ‘Lawi that zan’ meaning suitable night or the night they are fond of each other. On this second night the bridegroom’s whole family spent the night in another house; and the bride and bridegroom were left alone to spend the night together. Because all the bachelors slept in the Zawlbuk, and the groom was not allowed to go home alone, if he had none to accompany and conduct him to his house, he had to spend the whole night in the Zawlbuk.

Though it may seem unreasonable and improper to the present generation; yet because it was simply their way of life at night time, we might as well expose to view the following paragraph:

When it was time to sleep, the husband was led by his friends, from the Zawlbuk, to his house. If the young men were fond of joking or playing pranks, they would tie his hands together behind his back. According to a Mizo custom prevalent, in use and popular at that time, they were permitted to listen to the conversation of the newly wedded couple, from outside the house. Some of the pranksters who were more inquisitive and curious would even go so far as to peep, peek and pry through the many convenient holes in the bamboo wall. Loudly and excitedly, they would make their own comments. In that way, they bothered, disturbed, irritated and vexed the bride and bridegroom. It would go on and on, late into the night.

19. MIZO DIVORCE SYSTEM

It would not be wrong to say that man, even in his most primitive stage, need not be taught or told to enter into matrimony with the opposite sex. It is inherent in him, but due to some reasons or the other, a misunderstanding arises between husband and wife which sometimes results in separation or divorce between them. This has been witnessed way back in the days of our ancestors and out of the efforts rendered by some of them a certain set of rules and procedures were laid down to enable the chief and his elders settle such disputes of misunderstanding between the couple. After not less than 50 years of going by these set of rules, the procedure of settlement became a part of the Mizo culture and thereafter became known as 'Hnam Dan' or customary law and finally come to be known as 'The Mizo Tradition.'

Man has the power to distinguish between the good and the bad, right from wrong, likes and dislikes. He possesses the knowledge of knowing and understanding what is going on in and around him. It is this capacity of man that enabled him to understand, meditate and establish a set of rules to be considered as the Mizo Customary Law and a certain set of rules were laid down to settle divorce cases.

The Mizo tribe unlike other tribes of North-East India, is very fortunate to have an able, efficient, far-sighted administrator like Mr. N.E. Parry I.C.S., the Superintendent of Lushai Hills. He consulted 56 Mizo chiefs and others on their customs because he found it very difficult in trying cases to ascertain the correct custom. The Mizo customs had never been recorded earlier. It was Mr. Parry who consolidate all practices of separation or divorce in 1927 in his book known as *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonie*. This record has become a useful document in administering justice to the people.

In 1956 and 1960, the District Council of Mizoram published a new book on Mizo Customs in which few changes and some additions were made to Mr. Parry’s earlier records in order to suit the changing course of time and the gradual changes in the Mizo society. This record of customs by the Mizo District Council is now in use in the courts to settle cases and in the administration of justice. However, our main concern here is to study the Mizo customs from the cultural and historical point of view and our source of information shall be based on Mr. Parry’s records.

The book which contains a record of the Mizo Customary Law is an important book. It occupies an important place in the society because it is a book containing different sets of important rules to help us govern ourselves in our daily lives and to help us settle disputes.

As one reads the history of the Mizo people, one can easily come to a conclusion that in the early Mizo society, divorce or separation seldom took place. This is determined by the fact that we do not find much rules laid down to settle such cases. This signifies that the Mizo tribes of the early stages were pure at heart and their minds were free from any prejudices.

In order to understand the procedure of settlement in a divorce case, one should first understand the significance of the following terms used in connection with marriage prices:

Tlai	-	Rs. 20/-
Tlai sial	-	Rs. 20/-
Sepui (mithun)	-	Rs. 40/-
Sengalding	-	Rs. 40/-
Se nufa	-	Rs. 60/-
Puikhat sial	-	Rs. 2/-
Puisawm sial	-	Rs. 20/-

(The terms ‘Puikhat sial’ and ‘Puisawm sial’ refers to money because in the early times cash was not in plenty and so it was referred to in kind. ‘Puikhat sail’ was equivalent to Rs. 1/3 and by the year 1925 it was equivalent to Rs. 2/-).

With the exception of the chief, the total marriage price payable works out at Rs. 123/- (Rupees one hundred and twenty three only) consisting both the 'Manpui' and 'Mantang' a subsidiary price introduced after 1925. The 'Mantang' consists of the following prices:

- Sumhmahruai - Rs. 20/- payable to the bride's father or his brother.
- Sumfang - Rs. 8/- payable to the bride's father or her brother.
- Pusum - Rs. 6/- payable to the bride's maternal grandfather or her maternal uncle.
- Palal - Rs. 5/- payable to anyone whom the bride wishes to adopt as a father.
- Ni-ar - Rs. 2/- payable to the bride's paternal aunt.
- Naupuakpuan - Rs. 2/- payable to the bride's elder sister for having carried the bride on her back when she was a baby.

There are two other optional prices not included in the 'Mantang' but which need mention. These are 'Thian man' and 'Lawichal' which is payable out of the 'Manpui' and it is nonrefundable if and when a divorce takes place either by 'uire' or 'sumchhuah.'

- Thianman - Rs.2/- or Rs.3/- is paid to a female friend of the bride if she desires.
- Lawichal - Rs. 2/- is applicable to such cases if the bride and the groom do not belong to the same village. When the bride is escorted to her new village, one man is appointed leader of the escort party and paid Rs. 2/- which is known as 'Lawichal'.

There are two very important terms such as 'Bungrua' and 'Thuam' which is very often regarded as having one and the same interpretation but it is not so, and therefore, let us point out the difference between the two.

‘Bungrua’ – this term refers to certain property such as pawnpui, pawnfen, puan, puanrin, thul, thembu, phurhlan and bead necklaces. These are the compulsory personal property exclusively belonging to a woman which she takes along with her to her husband’s house after marriage.

‘Thuan’ – can be interpreted as a woman’s formal dowry. It is woman’s most important property which belongs to her and not to her husband. ‘Thuam’ consists of any one or more of the following items.

- (1) ‘Thival hrui thum nei’ or thival beads of three (3) strings.
- (2) Thifen hrui khat leh thival hrui khat or Thifen beads of one string and one string of thival.
- (3) ‘Thi-hua’ or a string of old amber beads worth Rs. 20/-
- (4) Rs. 20/- and not less if paid in cash.

Thus, the parents of the bride equip their daughters with either one or two of the items mentioned above as dowry. It is noticed that from the year 1925 after the Lushai Hills came under the British rule, cash has been included as dowry whereas before this period, the marriage price was settled or paid in kind either by giving ‘Mithun’ or other articles equivalent to it.

Now let us focus on the laws relating to the settlement of divorce, and we shall discuss several ways of settling such case individually as below:

Nupui ma/Nupui mak

A wife is divorced if and when her husband no longer want to accept her as his wife. In such case the man simply tells his wife, “Ka ma che,” which means “I divorce you” and then there is a divorce but in order to settle such kind of divorce, the following conditions must be kept in view.

Firstly, if the woman is ‘Thisen pal’ (meaning a woman having a child or children from her husband), the husband cannot claim

the repayment of the marriage price and if there is any outstanding balance of the price, he shall have to clear up his debts including the 'Thutphah' which is the last Rs. 20/- of the marriage price which is kept pending so that a woman can claim it and make use of it in her old age if any misfortune comes her way.

On the other hand, if there is no issue out of this marriage, the woman is 'Thisen pal lo,' the outstanding balance if any need not be paid. The children belong to their father and the woman leaves the house taking all her personal belongings 'Bungrua' and her dowry 'Thuam' along with her.

Kawngka Sula Mak

The kind of divorce literally means that the old wife goes out of the main door as the new wife enters the house through it. When a man prefers another woman to be his wife, he divorce his first wife by the 'Mak' system and he immediately marries this new found love, the divorce is known as 'Kawngka sula mak.'

The settlement procedure of such kind of divorce is similar to the case mentioned in case 1. But in this case the divorced wife is entitled to a share of the property known as 'Buhbal' which covers rice, paddy, maize, millet, arum bulbs etc. and all earthenware and household pots. There is an important point to note here i.e. the divorced wife can make her claim to the properties only if they have been living and managing their own affairs outside their parent's house, but if the couple lived with their parents, the divorced wife cannot claim the properties since these properties (Buhbal) belongs to the husband's parents who occupy the 'Khumpui' or the inner bed.

Regarding the welfare of the children if any, they are given the freedom to live either with their mother or father and their father will receive the marriage price of his daughters even if they live with their mother.

Sumchhuah

When a woman no longer wishes to live with her husband, she is at liberty to divorce him or leave him. This kind of divorce is known as 'Sumchhuah.' The marriage price that is paid to her relatives by her husband (with the exception of the amount paid as 'Fanghma no ei' is returned and she can leave the house taking away her all belongings – 'Bungrua and Thuam' and either sial (mithun) or silai (gun) whatever her parents many have given her as dowry, or if these have been disposed off, the amount agreed upon earlier must also be returned.

Fanghma no ei

This is not included in the 'Manpui' but refers to the amount of Rs. 20/- that a husband has to pay in order to call back his wife after he has discovered her or if she has left him by 'Sumchhuah.' 'Fanghma no ei' literally means 'eating a cucumber.' When a cucumber is eaten up it disappears forever, so also the money paid in recalling the wife is never recovered.

Sumlaitan

This refers to circumstance when both the parties agree to a divorce and this kind of divorce cannot be forced upon either parties. When an agreement of such kind of divorce is reached upon, the marriage price and the subsidiary prices are equally divided between the two parties. For instance, if there is any outstanding balance of the marriage price, the husband will have to pay up the remaining amount to make up half the total amount of the price. This procedure is applied with regard to the subsidiary prices.

Peksachang

This also refers to divorce by agreement, that is to say, a husband will not claim the return of whatever amount of the marriage price he has paid and the wife too will not claim the payment of whatever balance that is left to be paid.

Chhuping

If a woman, due to some circumstance/problems, is unable to perform her sexual duties as a wife to her husband, the husband can divorce his wife in such case. He will be entitled to get back all the price that he had paid at the time of their marriage.

Zangzaw

In the old custom when a man was found to be impotent, he was looked after by the priest for a period of three months but if still found to be impotent after the completion of the said period, the wife could divorce her husband and also had the advantage of keeping her price. This is known as 'Peksachang,' a divorce case settled vide Case no. 6.

However, if the wife has not been living with her husband during the said period of three months when he is being looked after by the village priest, the wife is considered to divorce him by 'Sumchhuah' which means that, the wife returns the marriage price.

Again, if the wife marries another man or if she has intercourse with another man beside her husband, she will be treated as 'Uire' or an adulterer.

Very often a dispute arises when the wife accuses her husband as being impotent. Such cases are then brought to the notice of the chief and his elders or 'Upas' who appoint some men and women to sleep near the couple so that these group of so called spies can report back to the chief about their findings. But it was found that these appointed persons can be partial at times and so a wise chief in order not to bring much disgrace on either party will decide the case by pronouncing the couple as ill matched and a divorce takes place.

Uire

Uire or adultery is the greatest disgrace for a woman. Our ancestors used to say that a woman who has committed adultery is liable to be bitten by a tiger. There are two kinds of Uire. One is when the wife is caught in the act of adultery even when her

husband is still alive and the other is adultery committed after the death of her husband.

In the first case of Uire, the method adopted for setting a divorce is that the wife returns the marriage price and she is not entitled to any of her personal belongings and her dowry. She will leave her husband's house with the only clothing that she had on her body.

The second case is adultery committed after the death of her husband inside his house. The punishments inflicted upon the woman in such situation is much lenient and also varies according to the extent of fault committed. Details are given below:

(a) When the husband dies, his wife is to perform a ritual known as 'Thla-hual' which means that she has to put aside a portion of the rice she eats at every meal for her dead husband for a period of 3 months and if during this period the wife commits adultery, she is said to be an adulterer or 'Uire' in the same manner as would have been if her husband was still alive. In such situation, the woman is compelled to return the whole amount of the marriage price and cannot claim any of her personal belongings such as 'Thuam' and 'Bungrua'.

(b) After the completion of the three lunar months in which the wife gives food to her husband's spirit, she returns to her relative's house where she will again perform the 'Thlahual' ritual and thereafter if she desires, she can go back to live with her husband's relatives to look after her children. However, after performing all the required rituals and if she commits adultery after returning to her husband's house, the whole amount or part of the price paid as marriage by the husband will be returned but if there is any balance yet to be paid than that would mean nothing. On leaving the house she can take with her all her personal belongings and property.

The children on the other hand can either force their mother to leave the house if she is found guilty or they can allow her to continue living with them but if they do so, they will have to pay up the remaining balance of her price if there be any.

(c) If a wife who does not have any children by her husband and if she has completed the rituals to be performed after the death of her husband, both in his and her house if she desires can go back to live in her husband's house. But if and when she is found guilty of committing adultery, she can be forced to leave the house prohibiting her to claim the balance up her price but she can keep her belongings (Thuam).

If a wife who does not have any children with her husband and if the woman is 'Thisen pal' which means that she has had children with her husband who has died, and the punishment incurred upon her when found guilty is not very severe. She can claim the balance of the price if there be any or any of her belongings and dowry as well.

(d) Whether or not she has any children, if she has not performed any of the necessary rituals and she commits adultery, the case is determined in the same manner as it would have been treated if her husband was alive. She will return the marriage price and also forfeit all her belongings and properties.

(e) If after the death of her husband, the woman continues to live in his house bringing up their children and have reached the stage when she marries off some of the children and then she commits adultery, she will be spoken of or treated as an adulterer but in name only. She need not return the marriage price but cannot claim the balance of the price.

The children can force her out of the house or they can allow her to live with them but if they do so, they will have to pay up the remaining balance or they will have to 'chawm' (look after her) and she can keep her property.

(f) A woman will still be considered a 'Uire' or adulterer if found guilty of it even if she is living with her children either in a new house or in a new village.

(g) A woman who has children but commits adultery is said to have committed a much greater offence than one who commits the same crime but has no children, and thus, the punishment too is much severe and it shall be decided as in Case 2 and 3.

(h) A woman who is accused of adultery but if not found guilty either by the chief or a court can order the husband to take his wife back or else the consequence will be that he has divorced his wife according to the 'Mak' system as in Case 1.

(i) The accomplice in the crime (adultery) who is in fact the male is not liable to any fine and one cannot claim any compensation from him.

Natna vanga inthen

This can be translated as divorce which takes place on account of madness. The custom to decide such cases are as follows.

If a woman becomes mad after her marriage, it is the custom and duty of the husband to look after her for three years, but even after the completion of the said period, there is no change in the condition of the woman, a divorce by agreement between the concerning parties as in Case No. 6 can be enforced. But, if a husband wants to divorce his mad wife before the expiring of the three years period then the divorce is settled as in Case No. 1.

However, if the woman has children, her husband will have to clear up the remaining balance of the marriage price and if she has no children, the ordinary custom that is followed is that the husband need not clear up any balance of the marriage price if there be any.

In a situation where we find that the husband is mad, the custom followed is the same as in the earlier circumstances but here it is the wife who looks after the husband and the measures adapted are exactly the same as in the first case. In this situation the wife can divorce her husband by following the same procedure of 'Peksachang' as in Case No. 6, and if she leaves her husband before the end of the three year period in which she must look after him she is considered 'Sumchhuah' which means that she will have to return the price and leave her husband's house vide Case No. 3.

Other Important Points

There are some minor cases resulting in a divorce between married couples. Since all of them are not important, let us point out a few of them.

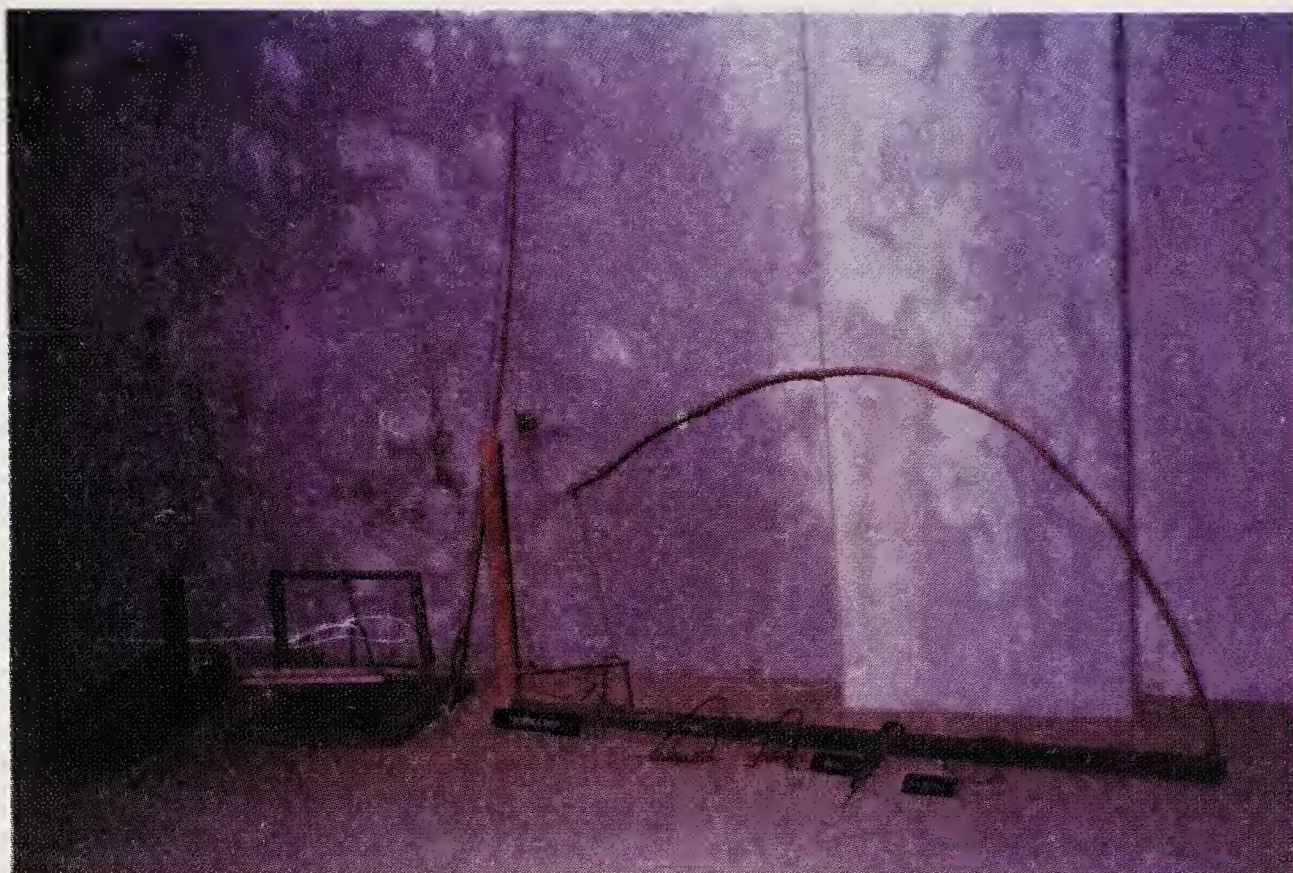
- (1) In the Mizo custom, a woman cannot be divorced by her husband's relatives. It is the man and only he who can divorce his wife if he so desires. If her husband is away for a long period on account a business trip or hunting and his wife leave the house not to return, she is then considered 'Sumchhuah' vide Case No. 2.
- (2) There is also a well set tradition of dealing with a situation where death occurs either of the husband or the wife and in such case the following custom is followed which is also worth mentioning.

Lamthlang Raphla

This term refers to a woman whose husband has died. Immediately after her husband's burial, the woman is taken to her parents home and is expected to take atleast a meal and in some cases the parents insists that widow spend a night with them. The significance of this gesture is to make known to others that their daughter still has some shoulders to lean on for support at any time even though her husband has passed away.

On the other hand, the relatives of the deceased often show great opposition and resentment at the time when the widow is being taken to her relatives house. This opposition on the part of her in-laws signify that they still regard the widow as a member of their family and wants her to continue living with them. Thus, these gestures shown by either parties clearly indicate how much they care for the woman who has lost her husband.

In the Mizo custom it is believed that the spirit of the dead leaves after three months and before the expiry of the said period he is believed to be amongst them, and after the completion of the said period a ritual known as "Inthian" is performed which is



Various kinds of traps for birds and rats.



Mizo costumes before 1600 A.D.-the first and foremost garment was 'siapsuap' i.e. lower garment resembling a skirt. Men covered themselves with kilts like 'siapsuap'.



Mizo costumes around 1600-1750 A.D. During this period, the way of dressing gradually improved. The women's siapsuap were made of fine stripes of hruikhau. Men were wearing cloaks which covered their shoulders and chests.



Mizo costumes around 1750-1850 A.D. This was the time when Mizo moved westwards and most of them were settled across the river Tiau. They started using improved handlooms and most important thing was discovery of black and red dye.



Mizo costumes around 1850-1930. This was the time Britishers entered their area and menfolk started dressing up like 'bara-sahib', though traditional dress was always worn.



Mizo costumes around 1930-1955 AD. Mizo gave their cloth more colours. They wove beautiful flower designs. Mizo women excelled in weaving and produced beautiful shawls and puan of different designs.



With advance looms, knowledge of dyes, new techniques, skills and designs, all craftsman of Mizoram are abreast with changing trends. The designs are more definite, well-defined, distinct and precise. **Kawr chei**, i.e. jacket, **puan chei** i.e. kilt, **thanchhuah kawar**, tops are regarded as traditional dress of Mizo.

believed to mark the end of stay of the spirit in its old home. What is important to note here is that until and unless the wife prefers the required “Inthian” ritual she must live in her in-laws house and if before the ritual is performed, the widow is found guilty of adultery she is considered a ‘Uire’ or adulterer.

However, after the widow has performed the ceremony, she is free and if at all she wants to re-marry, she then returns to her maiden home to fulfill that purpose.

Makpa Hnamhrual Chat

This term simply mean when translated as on the death of a woman the bond that ties both her husband and her relatives has also come to an end. Her husband is also required to perform the “Inthian” ritual after the completion of the three months after his wife’s death. It is after this ritual when the relatives of his dead wife will take back all the belongings of the dead woman. The husband may still wish to re-marry but not before he has paid up the marriage price. The children can also inherit the properties of their dead mother after an agreement has been reached between them and their mother’s relatives.

Thus, these are some of the important and highly respectable rules to settle divorce cases which are laid down in the Mizo custom.

20. BONE OF CONTENTION – CORPSE OR SICK PERSON

Some writers describe this snatching and scrambling over a sick person or corpse carried and conducted by all the young men from their village to the next village ‘In-nuai.’ It means an encounter followed by a fracas, melee, scrimmage, tussle, combat or battle royal between two opposing forces. It was popularly known as ‘mi zawn in-chuh.’ No one knows exactly when this custom came into being. When the Mizo used to live in villages which raided each other constantly, the custom of carrying a sick person or dead body of a stranger to the next village till the invalid or cadaver reached his or her village was not known. When the British entered, annexed and ruled Mizoram after 1890, they prohibited all fighting between the villages. More and more people began travelling from village to village. That is why many conclude that the custom originated in the year 1870. It seemed that great importance was attached to it and it was practiced much between the year 1890 to 1940.

It was ‘Tlawmngaihna’ which gave birth to the custom known as ‘mi zawn in-chuh.’ If a person was sick while sojourning in another village, and if he could not return to his village on his own; it was the duty and responsibility of the young men to carry him back to his own village. An urgent or special messenger was sent to the next and nearest village in the direction of the closest way to the sick person’s village. When the chief received the message, the village crier would announce it immediately in the village streets. Then they would also send an urgent messenger to the next village on the way to the sick person’s village to inform them about it. In that way the news was sent from village to village till it was eventually received by the people in the sick person’s village.

The stretcher used for carrying the sick person was called a 'hlang.' It was a bed without legs and a bamboo mat was placed on it. The beams supporting the bed was made of wood or bamboo and protruded at the four corners of the stretcher, so that four persons could carry it at the same time. To shade the sick person from the heat of the sun, they also constructed a roof by bending split bamboos and covering it with a sheet.

If the sick stranger or traveller died unfortunately in their village, the young men would carry the corpse all the way to his village, just as they would have done a sick person; but it was called 'mi ruang zawn' (carrying a corpse). In such a case, they did not use a stretcher. They wrapped the cadaver in a sheet and tied it into a pole. They wrapped a bamboo mat round the bundled corpse and the pole, made it secure and then carried it. There was no need for them to be gentle or careful with their burden, so it was carried swiftly as if they were afraid it would decompose while they were carrying it. They quickened the pace till they were running with their burden. There is a Mizo simile or metaphor which describes a person in a hurry as – 'He's like someone carrying something putrid, smelly and stenchy.'

When a sick person or dead body was carried, the young men from the next village would say that it was not the way of those who practiced 'Tlawmngaihna' to wait at the border which demarcated the boundary between the two villages. They would go right till the border to meet those who were carrying the sick person and try to relieve them of their burden. Determined to the altruistic, those who were carrying the burden would do their best, firmly but politely, to reach the border without giving up their burden. Some would even try to take it across the border as far as possible.

It was at this stage that the contest of Tlawmngaihna would ensue; and the bone of contention would be sick person. The young men from the next village would say, "We'll take over and carry the burden." The young men who were carrying the sick

person would say, “We’re not tired yet. We’ll carry it farther.” Both parties being chivalrous, the gallant young men of the next village would attempt to take the litter by force, and in the tussle, those who were strong and stalwart would inadvertently shove their opponents aside causing them to fall backwards. The litter would be shaken so much so that it was unpleasant, uncomfortable and distressing for the invalid.

As time went on, some of the young men who had been rebuffed, shoved aside and embarrassed, would never forget the incident. It would rankle their minds and they would say, “The way that fellow treated me! The next time they carry a sick person I’ll take my revenge.” There certainly was a next time, and the two parties opposed each other all the more. Sometimes the litter would be set aside and the scrimmage and the tussle between the two parties engendered animosity, enmity, hostility and antagonism. In this way, the tackling, grappling, seizing and taking a sick person or corpse by storm became popular in Mizoram.

Strict rules were made by the chief and leaders of young men (val-upa). The young men were not allowed to hurt or injure their opponents. They were forbidden to break an opponents arm or leg. They were not allowed to injure their antagonist’s eyes or ears. Biting, punching, striking with the fist, strangling the throat, and injuring the private parts were all rules against and forbidden.

All they were permitted to do was to wrestle, trip or throw their opponents on the ground and hold them down helpless on their backs. Those who succeeded in doing that were regarded as the winners. They were not allowed to touch the Val-upas, and if a chief was present, it was unlawful to lay even a finger on him. In those days people were good natured, courteous and well behaved. Due to this fact, it was like a good sport or game in which many participated. It was merely a contest, and the bone of contention was a sick person or a corpse. It was also a golden opportunity in which they were able to practice ‘Tlawmngaihna’ which is the Mizo way of being altruistic and chivalrous.

The thrill and excitement of wrestling and throwing an opponent and holding him down, afforded great pleasure; and it was also an inexhaustible topic of conversation. They would look forward eagerly for the next occasion of carrying a sick person or corpse. When this game or sport was at the height of its popularity, the sick person was put in a same place as soon as possible, and the contest of strength and agility took place on the jungle path and on the hill slope below the path. When they went to meet a party carrying a corpse, they would ambush them at a convenient spot and leap down from their places above the path.

Sometimes the party that went to meet those who were carrying a corpse would be divided into two groups. One group would make a stand on the path, bunched together. The biggest and strongest among them would be placed in front to bear the brunt. There they would wait for those who were carrying the corpse. The other group went farther across the border and hid behind bushes and foliage. They waited till the corpse and those who accompanied it had all passed by. Then they would attack them from the rear. This tactic of attacking simultaneously from the front and rear was called, 'Ruang chai-cheh' (corpse pincer). When they employed this pincer movement, it was difficult for the young men who were carrying the corpse to make a firm stand.

When there were a sick person or a corpse to be carried, and it afforded an opportunity for the young men of two villages to compete, they would gather together at the exit or entrance of the contest. Sometimes, the chief of the village would also be present. The Val-upas of both villages would explain the rules as follows: "Later on when the scrimmage starts, I'll shout, 'young men, enough of this! Stop!' But you must not obey my command. You must make a stand and exert yourself more and more in the scrimmage. If I beat you with a leafy branch, that would also mean 'exert yourselves more, 'but when I strike you with a supple stick, a cane or a switch, you must really stop.'"

All the young men from two villages, with torsos naked from

the waist upward, would come face to face before the burden reached the boundary. When they came in sight of each other they would shout and repeat the words, 'Haw haw, haw haw!' Both parties would clash belligerently, and in the melee that ensued, the sick person or corpse would be forgotten.

Like a swarm of bees on a honeycomb, they would merge and combine, and become mixed together. Like hydras with many heads and waving limbs, bunched together, they would roll off the path and go trembling down the slope. Later on the bunches would break up and duels would ensue. Opponents and antagonists of former scrimmages would meet, and some of them sought for their objects of revenge. Some aided their friends who were in the positions of underdogs. Ultimately the minority would be outnumbered by the majority, and the majority would gain the upperhand. Nevertheless, quite a number of the members of the winning side lost their bouts and were held flat on their backs by their opponents who leaned on them with their breasts or both hands.

Those who came to relieve the carriers of their burden were the winners if they relieved them completely at the spot where the fracas took place. But after the fray if they shared the burden as far as the boundary, those who brought the sick person or corpse from their village were the winners. After the great contest of courtesy and chivalry, which ended in a free for all, a wide area of the place where they had scuffled would be made bare of bushes, shrubs and undergrowth, and it became a bare spot in the dark tropical jungle, till the vegetation encroached upon it and nature restored it back to normal.

While the young men wrestled to gain the upperhand, the Val-upas or chiefs of both villages would be strictly spectators. They would watch the fray indifferently or with great interest. Even if the young men of their village were winning, they would courteously call out, "That's enough! stop!" The young men would remember the rules that had been explained before they had set out from their villages, so they would not desist. Usually it was

winning side that would suggest that it was time to stop. This itself would show that they were courteous and altruistic. The reason why they wished to desist was because they did not want those whom they leaned upon and held down, to suffer too long. Their consideration for the underdog was aesthetic, beautiful, charming and gracious. The young men showed great respect towards the Val-upa bachelors. Those whose behaviour, conduct and deportment were extremely bad, and those who were stubborn were threshed, trounced and belaboured well with the switch. Those who broke the rules of the game were scolded and rebuked and they would never repeat the offence.

There have been quite a number of rough-and-tumble contests to gain possession of a sick person or cadaver, and they are all worth mentioning. Among them, the one that the old folks talk about most, happened between the years 1870 to 1875. The villages concerned were Champhai and Kelkhang-Lungdup.

The burden was a sick person who had to be carried from Champhai via Lungdup to the village of the invalid. The young men of Champhai had qualms regarding the forthcoming clash with the young men of Lungdup who were known to be formidable and indomitable. They formed a large amalgamated group which included Champhai and the nearby villages which were ruled separately by their respective chiefs. To distinguish themselves from their opponents the young men of Champhai and the nearby villages smeared their foreheads with red dye. The Val-upas chose and appointed sturdy young men of strong physique to carry the litter. To precede the litter and act as a vanguard, about two score of burly young men of stronger physique were chosen.

The young men of Lungdup were well aware of the preparations made by the Champhai group. They coerced and compelled all the young men in their village and also of Kelkang village to take part in going to meet the Champhai young men, to relieve them of their burden. On the saddle of a hill which is situated just before reaching the present village of Kelkang, they prepared to make a stand. Three abreast, elbows linked and

brunched together, they formed a human blockade about fifteen metres long and filling the pathway. They were determined to stop the group bearing the litter. The strongest and most sturdy who had been previously chosen and detailed to hide among the bushes above the pathway. Strategically positioned and ready for the fray, they waited eagerly and impatiently.

Hundreds of young men from Champhai with menacing and bellicose attitudes and tones approached at a fast pace; definitely repeating the words, 'Haw haw, haw haw haw!' They were shirtless, half-naked, and with their foreheads dyed red. Some of them who were fidgety, excited and eagerly impatient, frisked about in great anticipation of the forth coming contest of 'Tlawmngaihna,' strength and agility.

Hundreds of Lungdup youngmen, waiting on the saddle of the hill and blocking the pathway, also repeated the words, 'Haw haw, haw haw haw!' defiantly. Some of them were so eager and impatient, that they were ready to fly at or rush towards their opponents.

When the two large opposing forces of Champhai and Lungdup, consisting of hundreds of young men faced each other, the bedlam, uproar, clamour and hullabaloo or their defiant, challenging voices rose, swelled, amplified and was so great, that it rent the air, woke the echoes and resounded on the saddle of the hill. The old folks say that the sound was deafening, and earsplitting; so much so that some of the young men who were eager and excited, almost climbed and ran over the heads and shoulders of those who were in front of them!

Then they clashed! The burly young men of Champhai who were of strong physique and were the vanguard, rushed headlong into the ground of sturdy young men of Lungdup who were bunched together with elbows locked, blocking the pathway. Like a hungry wild beast voraciously, greedily and ravenously devouring its kill, they forced their way through the blockade! The force and impact shook the whole group of Lungdup young men; but they rallied their strength and determination and stood their ground,

so that they gained an equilibrium which stopped the Champhai group from going right through them. The progress of the litter was halted. At that very moment, like a swarm of bees and like a hundred meteors, falling with great velocity, the young men of Lungdup came hurtling down from above the pathway. The Champhai vanguard and those who were carrying the stretcher lost their balance, and a gap was formed in the forces of the Champhai group.

The litter and its bearers were knocked and pushed from side to side, and a glorious melee and scrimmage took place. Huge groups of human beings locked together, went rolling and tumbling down the slope below the pathway. By the time the rolling conglomeration of bodies came to rest, the young men of Champhai and Lungdup were sweating profusely. This caused their bodies to be so slippery, they could not get a firm hold of each other while they wrestled. Furthermore, at that time there was no marking ink or indelible ink, so the sweat deleted the red marks on the foreheads of the young men of Champhai. The Lungdup young men also rubbed the marks off with their hands. Nobody could distinguish between friends and foes; so the battle became a free for all! There was neither progress nor victory for both sides, and the Val-upas (middle age bachelors) intervened and stopped the scrimmage.

The Champhai group were the majority, but they were a coalesced, combined group without unity and were not of one mind and purpose. It was difficult to command and control them; so they could not gain the upperhand. On the other hand, though the Kelkang-Lungdup groups were the minority, there were hundreds of them. They were orderly, and by rubbing off the red marks on the foreheads of their opponents they caused confusion among them and pandemonium reigned: and one of the greatest contest of altruism, strength and agility, in which the bone of contention was an invalid, ended in a draw. Though this great broil was arrested and terminated in a dead heat or tie, because the Val-upas told them to cut it out; it has been a topic of many conversations for more than a century. Our old folks say that

there has never been any other encounter and affray as great as that which occurred between the young men of Champhai and Lungdup.

As time elapsed, the new generations did not know how to make good use of this olden days custom of helping those who were in need of help. It had blossomed from the beautiful and charming seeds of altruism, chivalry and courtesy. It indicated unity, oneness and solidarity of the people in each village. It brought about friendliness and intimacy between villages. It became a great game which engendered team work, sportsmanship, fair play and candour.

As time went on, incidents of rough handling of opponents took place now and then. Young men of small villages dared not venture against overwhelming numbers from other village, to snatch or deprive them of the sick person or corpse they were carrying. Many difficulties arose, so much that the village administrators had to interdict and disallow this contest of altruism and competition of nimbleness and spryness. And so it came to pass that this great enjoyable, delightful and pleasurable sport decreased and declined.

However, in the villages in Mizoram where there were no motor roads, it was still necessary for the young men to carry sick persons and cadavers. On such occasion, the chiefs of the villages concerned negotiated and the burden was handed over the next village and so on peacefully, without the young men clashing or contending over the burden they carried. In an orderly manner, wrestling matches were arranged and took place on the boundary. These wrestling bouts afforded great entertainment and was a good athletic event. But gradually, people lost interest in wrestling, and these healthy contests declined and faded away.

With the passing of time, the encounters followed by a fracas, and the wrestling matches which were good, proper and worthy customs and culture of olden days of Mizo life gradually vanished.

After the year 1966, which is known in Mizoram as the year of confusion, discord, disquiet and disturbance, it could be said that this age old custom was practiced no more. It is right for the present generation to remember the well ordered way in which a sick or defunct person was carried and passed on from village to village in the days of yore. The inimitable encounters and the well controlled frays that ensued, give us a clear insight of the good and great characteristics, traits, customs and culture of the Mizo.

*The clash and the fray
Of Champhai and Lungdup,
Is far away,
In the past, like a jot;
But I see no reason
Why Mizo altruism
Should ever be forgotten!*

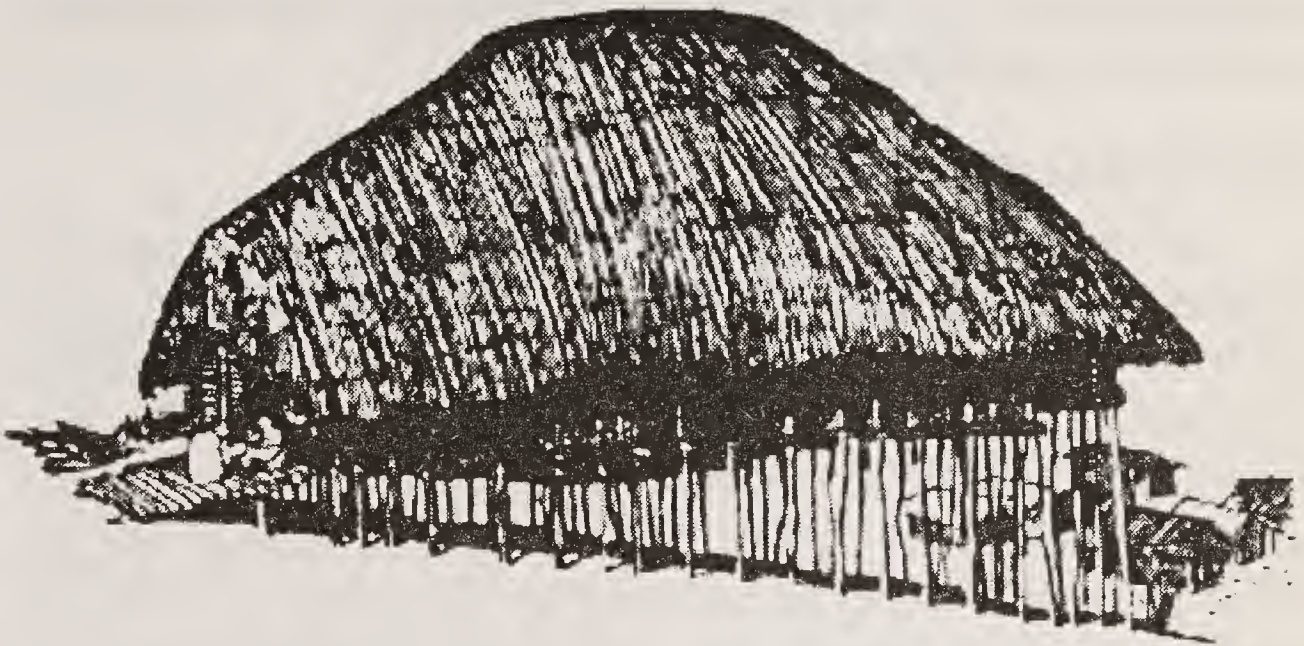
21. ZAWLBUK – BACHELORS’ DORMITORY

It is difficult to know when the Mizo began using the Zawlbuk. Its beginnings are lost in antiquity. The old folks used to say that before the Mizo migrated west and crossed the river Tiau in the year 1700, they were dwelling east of the Tiau. The young men used to sleep on the porch or verandar of the Chief’s house; or wherever it was convenient in the Chief’s house: so that he could call them immediately or spontaneously when he needed them.

It was a good arrangement, and the people came to know and understand that the young men were useful when there was a clarion call at night and they were all gathered together in one place to act at once when it was necessary to safeguard and defend the village against enemies; and to maintain order in the village. It was mainly due to this fact that the Zawlbuk was established and played an important role in the life of the Mizo for over two centuries, till its usefulness came to an end in the year 1938.

The first clear evidence of the existence of the Zawlbuk is known when the Mizo lived together in the second sizeable village called ‘Selesih’ meaning seven thousand. It was situated in and around the present village of Khawbung (South) and Zawllsei, between the years 1740 to 1750. It is said that the village consisted of 7,000 houses and was an amalgamation of seven chiefs and their subjects. There were seven Zawlbuks in Selesih. All the young men used to sleep in the Zawlbuks, and they also used to lie down and rest there when they were tired, so it came to be known as ‘Zawlbuk’ (rest house).

The Zawlbuk was built entirely by the community and particularly young men. All the people regarded it as their



Zawlbuk, bachelor's dormitory played an important role
in the life of Mizo.

responsibility; and there was no need to force, insist or impress them to build the Zawlbuk. The timber and bamboos, and even the pieces of cane were painstakingly prepared to be used in the construction of the Zawlbuk. Everything they used in its construction was of the best quality. It was built to withstand rough weather; so that strong gales, windstorms, hurricanes and heavy rains could not destroy it; so much so that it is mentioned in a song as follows:

“Bound by the nations it never shakes.”

Zawlbuks of large villages were big and those of little villages were small. In conformity and in keeping with their villages, they competed in having the most massive ‘bawhbel’ in their Zawlbuks. The bawhbel was a big, ponderous beam on the barrier at the entrance of a Zawlbuk. ‘Bawhbel’ means ‘borne down upon over and over again.’

The whole male population of the village, including the children took part in carrying the bawhbel from the jungle to the village and placing it on the barrier at the entrance of the Zawlbuk. The noise, din and tumult they raised while carrying the big bawhbel was clamorous and deafening. That is why in the Mizo language

a mob or a big crowd of people making a din is described by using the following metaphor, “Like carrying and transporting the bawhbel of a sizeable village.”

How It Was Maintained

All the boys in the village who were over nine years old gathered firewood to be used in the Zawlbuk. Every evening each boy had to fetch and carry two or more bundles as stipulated by a prefect of the Zawlbuk and those boys were known as ‘Children who gather pieces of wood.’ It afforded great pleasure to the parents when their sons reached the age when they could fetch firewood for the Zawlbuk. No one was allowed to shirk; and if any of the boys shirked and were reported or found out, the Zawlbuk prefect would make them fetch two or three times the usual amount for one day. This punishment was known as ‘recurring or repeated fetching of faggots.’ And so, the work and responsibility of fetching and supplying firewood for the Zawlbuk was done and carried out by the youngsters.

Some of the bigger boys from among the youngsters were appointed to clean the Zawlbuk and keep it spick and span. Every evening they would sweep the floor, get rid of the soot and throw away the ash which had bed bugs from the crevices of the floor. When it was necessary, they also fetched drinking water for the young men who slept in the Zawlbuk. The water was carried and kept in long, large bamboo tubes which stood in a row against the bawhbel. Those boys were exempted from fetching faggots; and every month or a little longer than a month, the Zawlbuk prefects chose and appointed other boys to relieve them in rotation.

If the Zawlbuk deteriorated and needed to be repaired or maintained, it was shameful for the young men. If it was not necessary to call the people in the village to help them, four or five young men would do the repairs themselves; but if the work of repairing the Zawlbuk was too heavy, the Val-upas would

suggest the repairing and all the young men would work on it vigorously with verve and vim and renovate it.

Usefulness

It Controlled the Life of the People

All the young men slept in the Zawlbuk. They would discuss the bad habits that some of the people had fallen into; and they would surreptitiously punish those who had transgressed against the laws of the community. They had the power and authority to do it, because like the small triple statues of the three little monkeys depicting, "See no evil, hear no evil, and say no evil," the chief of the village would close his eyes, ears and mouth; because he knew that the culprits deserved the punishment. If any children went out of line, the young men of the Zawlbuk scolded, reprimanded and even punished them. If a certain child was incorrigible, with the agreement and sanction of the village leaders, the young men were allowed to use strong measures to change for the betterment. The Zawlbuk was invaluable and convenient in controlling children and led them to better behaviour. It was also instrumental in building good character.

On the other hand, when the owner of an orchard realized that someone was stealing his fruits, usually he would blame the children and punish them severely, without any proof. The form of punishment was called 'buk khai.' The owner of the orchard would tie together a large number of pestles which were used for pounding paddy. He would then tie the heavy bundle of pestles to the end of a long bamboo. The bamboo was placed on a contraption used for hanging, stretching and drying hands or skins of cotton yarn. Then he would force the children to fetch firewood from the jungle and tie the bundles of firewood to the other end of the bamboo, till the firewood balanced and was equal to the weight of the pestles at the other end. This entailed vigorous, tiring and back-breaking work; for it needed 40 to 50 loads or bundles of faggots to equal the weight of the pestles!

Being innocent, the children would appeal to the Val-upas, and finally the young men of the Zawlbuk would champion their cause and defend the children. The punishment that was to be inflicted upon them would generally be rescinded.

And besides, if a young man who had given his arms and head to be cut off to defend the village and the community against enemies, was despised by a certain young lady; in anger and fury, he would report it to the Val-upa of the Zawlbuk. All the young men would set out from the Zawlbuk to reprimand the girl in question who had despised one of them. They would dismantle the front verandah of the girl's house, and even go so far as to kick down the bamboo matting back wall of the house. Her parents would never take offence, because they knew that in the future they would need the young men to defend them against wild beasts and enemies. In fact, they would entreat and implore the young men to forgive and pardon their daughter. The Zawlbuk was useful and was able to control any wrongs done in their society.

It Was Useful in an Emergency

In the olden days, they used to raid each others villages. It was a life of constant and continuous warfare in which they used to ambush their enemies. Tigers often used to enter the village and carry off a domestic animal. Then, there were sick persons or dead bodies to be carried to the next village. Sometimes someone got lost in the jungle, and the young men had to go to look for the lost person. Sometimes there was a forest fire which threatened to engulf and destroy the village, and all the people to work together as fire-fighters.

In all these emergencies, all the men and young men in the village had to be prepared when the alarm was sounded or when they heard the premonitory call. Because all the young men slept together in the Zawlbuk, it was convenient for them to work together simultaneously whenever the necessity arose.

A Place Where Children Were Controlled

From the age of nine till they grew up to be young men, the

boys had to fetch firewood for the Zawlbuk. No one was allowed to shirk. To find out if anyone had shirked, all the children in the village were called together and questioned. It was called an 'Interrogation.' The boys were asked and if a boy had shirked and was found out, he was punished and sentenced to fetch firewood a certain number of times. It would be four or five times. For the culprit, it was a shameful, heavy and rigorous punishment.

If a boy who fetched firewood for the Zawlbuk was daring and brave enough to cut or chop with his knife a wild beast wounded in the chase, he was exempted from the task of fetching firewood. In some villages, a boy who cut part of the leg or shoulder of the wild beast, was also exempted from fetching firewood.

However, the boys were never exempted from doing other tasks, such as: sweeping and tidying the Zawlbuk, throwing away the ash accumulated in the fire-place and fetching water for the young men in the Zawlbuk. exempting them from the 'Thing nawi fawm' (gathering and fetching faggots), was a good lesson and award, and it was a good way of teaching by honour, exaltation and celebrations.

If a boy was exceptionally bad, he was censured, reproached and reprimanded in the Zawlbuk. In olden days, before the British ruled Mizoram, children were very obedient. They never argued with nor affronted their elders; neither were they discourteous or audacious. Thus zawlbuk was useful and important in controlling the children, and it also helped in building their characters.

A Centre for Sports and Games

The floor of the Zawlbuk was wide and firm. There the children were made to wrestle. The little ones were paired off, then the bigger ones. All young men wrestled with each other. Sometimes there were strangers and guests whom they challenged; and the wrestling matches took place in the Zawlbuk. it was a good sport which helped to break the ice and life long friendships. Zawlbuk was a useful place for training the boys in

one of the greatest and most popular of sports among the Mizo. It was the place where they learnt the art of wrestling.

A Place for Learning Arts and Crafts

The old men and married men would sit and chat in the Zawlbuk. using rottan, cane and bamboo strips they would weave all kinds of things and baskets of different shapes and sizes. They also carved handles for hoes and axes. Young boys would watch and learn from their elders. No one was reluctant, unwilling or averse to passing on their knowledge, skill and dexterity to others. Zawlbuk was the main place where all kinds of skills in arts and crafts were passed on to the children, descendants and to posterity. These skills are evident even among the Mizo of today.

Community Rules and Administration

Many matters which pertained and applied to, and embraced and included the whole community, but could not be put up to the court of the chief and his elders, were discussed, decided, resolved and carried out by men in the Zawlbuk. Things pertaining with traps; surrounding and encircling wild animals in a hunt; and even community fished with herbal toxins were discussed and decided in the Zawlbuk. Social and communal ideas and opinions which were ‘decided upon in the Zawlbuk and proclaimed,’ were regarded by the Chief and elders as very important, and were never particularly discarded or vetoed by them. That is why the Zawlbuk was important in ruling and administering society.

Keeping Mizo ‘tlawmngaiha’ Alive

Utter meekness, humbleness, self-effacement and to live and have their being for others, is the core and essence of the truth Mizo way of life. In olden days it made social and communal life pleasant. It gave comfort and peace of mind to the worthless, the poor and the needy. It was one of the most important characteristics of Mizo. The Mizo enjoy working together and co-operating with each other. They get together and worked happily; and though a few of them played the clown and joked

about everything and some of their jests and the quips were dirty, foul, nasty or obscene, it caused hilarious laughter and made the work light and easy. A handful of them would sit and talk and talk, but they were the one who possessed resourcefulness and good judgment; and the work progressed speedily and expeditiously. But, a large majority, especially the youngmen who slept in the Zawlbuk, knew that the father of success is work, and the mother of achievement is ambition or a goal. They were willing to work and had a mind to work, and whatever their hand found to do, they did it with all their mind. They gave themselves to any task at hand; and since God helps those who help themselves, success was in their hands.

And besides, they had the right attitude towards work, and that right attitude multiplied success and brought with it happiness. They did not work for their own gain or for themselves. They worked for others. They were kind, courteous and assiduous. They practiced the Mizos altruism which known as ‘Tlawmngaihna.’

It was in this way that in the days of yore, the Mizo worked happily together and finished the most irksome, toilsome and most tiresome work. It was the young men who slept in the Zawlbuk that kept Mizo altruism alive, and caused it to grow and bud and blossom into the beautiful customs and traits which add up to the Mizo identity and personality. That is why the Zawlbuk was useful in keeping Mizo Tlawmngaihna alive.

In Handling Down History and Traditions

In olden days there were no book or written records. Everything was landed down to the next generation by the old people who narrated the legends of their ancestors lovingly the married men and elders sat in the Zawlbuk and talked about the wars and battles, wise and courageous Chiefs, great warriors and hunters – and the famous, brave, chivalrous and intrepid ‘Pasaltha!’

The legends and tales they told were very interesting. The young men and even the children would listen attentively and retain them. It was in the Zawlbuk that the history and traditions of the Mizos were to the next generation.

How The Zawlbuk Became Outmoded

After being useful for a long period of 200 years, the Zawlbuk which emanated a great spiritual atmosphere was gradually neglected, disregarded and came to an end. Time brought great changes in Mizoram. Arrival of Christianity and the establishing day schools by the Missionaries and the British government brought changes in the life of the Mizos.

In 1925, there were no Zawlbuk functioning in the village; but N.E. Parry, who was the Superintendent of Mizoram from 1924 to 1928, was of the opinion that it would be good to continue using the Zawlbuks: and in the year 1926 he ordered the people to build Zawlbuks in every village. Many villages obeyed and they were busy as bees constructing Zawlbuks; but some villages were unable to complete them by dint of labour and effort.

In the year 1938, the Superintendent, A.G. McCall (1935-1945) convened a social meeting in Aizawl, Thakthing Veng (ward), to discuss the re-establishment of Zawlbuk. The people argued against it and said that it was inconsistent and incompatible with education and Christianity: so the Superintendent decided and resolved that the order to re-establish the Zawlbuk was rescinded, and the use of the Zawlbuks came to an end.

During that period, though there were Zawlbuks standing in some of the villages, the young men did not occupy them, and the Zawlbuks had lost to emanate, and they had no authority, control and prestige over the community.

The Zawlbuk has become a thing of the past. But still, the Zawlbuk has a place deep down in the hearts of the Mizo. It will

remain in their memories and will never be forgotten. Its usefulness to the community, the people, the poor and the needy; and the ways in which it prolonged and kept alive the beautiful Mizo way of life such as 'Tlawmngaihna' will be remembered for ever.

22. ZU-INTOXICATING DRINKS

It is not known when the Mizo started using, imbibing, quaffing and ingurgitating zu. Besides they also fermented rice beer and drank beer made from Job's tear, Indian corn or maize and also from millets. Zu played an important role in many phases of the life of the Mizo. Here are few different kinds of zu and how they were used.

The Different Kinds of Zu

Zufang

It was made from mim (Job's tear) long ago, and the beverage was called 'Mim zu.' Later, it was made from 'Fa zu' and 'Kawng lawng' – both are collectively known as 'buh ban.' Literally translated 'buh ban' means glutinous rice. Zu-fang and Mim-zu are not regarded as real zu. They do not cause much intoxication and are sweet as honey. Zu-fang was prepared, malted and brewed by every family.

Most of all, they drank it when they were fatigued, thirsty and tired. Sometimes two friends would sit and chat and sip zu-fang together. The pot used for brewing zu-fang was much smaller than the one used for brewing zu-pui which was a beverage used on great important occasions.

Zulawm

This zu was for children. Sometimes a group of boys would contribute paddy and request a widow or someone to brew zu-lawm for them. When it was ready, all the boys would come together and enjoy a drinking party. However, it was done only once a year.

Zupui

In contradiction to zu-fang, zupui is a Mizo rice beer. In bygone days it was popular and used widely among the Mizos and was used on all important occasions. It was brewed in a big pot and kept ready for use in every house in the village. It was served on important occasion. Zupui was made from a mixture of bran and broken rice. It was never imbibed by individuals, but was consumed by a large company or a group of people.

Tinzu

In 1890 when the British annexed Mizoram, many non-Mizos soldiers came with them. Their wives used to make beer from husked rice (buhfai). The rice was boiled and the cooked rice was spread out on a mat. When the rice became cool, they sprinkled yeast on it. The malt (ngan) was then put in a four gallon kerosene or ghee 'tin' to be fermented. The tin was lined with leaves or cloth. Because a tin was used, the beer, which was as white as milk, came to be known as 'Tin-zu'. Tinsu was not known to the Mizo of bygone days. It was introduced by the non-Mizo soldiers, among the Mizo after the year 1890.

Rakzu (Spirits, Distilled zu)

Rak-zu is made from rice. It was the Indians from the plains who taught the Mizo how to distill the fermented malt. Since it was introduced into Mizoram, rakzu had become popular upto the present day. The Indians called it 'Raksi,' came to be known to the Mizo as 'Rak-zu.'

The above account and descriptions covers the five main alcoholic beverages imbibed and used by the Mizo on various occasions. There are other drinks which were dubbed according to the place and time they were used, such as 'hranden zu' which was made from pounded paddy, including the chaff, bran and husks – the beverage was used when they celebrated the end of

weeding their jhooms and on other occasions; and also ‘sumdeng zu’ which was set aside specially for the young men and maidens in appreciation for their pounding and husking a tremendous or immense amount of paddy to make zu for a ‘Chawng’ festival of drinking, feasting and dancing which lasted three days.

When It Was Used

In the olden days life of the Mizos, zu was used widely on various occasions. It was used in sacrificial ceremonies. It was used when they kept vigil and kept up the whole night condoling and consoling a bereaved family. When the price of a bride was paid, all those who were to receive a share of the wedding price brought a pot of zu to the bride’s house and they would drink together. In the same way, a large amount of zu was ingurgitated on the day of wedding.

When they were successful in a hunt, it was compulsory for each of those who received a leg or a shoulder of the animal (sabawp man) and the elders who had washed and rinsed the stomach and entrails (a pumpui su), to contribute a pot of zu each, to celebrate the success of their hunt or chase. To celebrate the taking of the head of an animal, the neighbours of the successful hunter would contribute pots of zu, and they would hold and enjoy a beer party.

When they killed a tiger and held a ceremony of ‘Sapui vui’ (the disposing of a dead tiger); various festivals such as Chapchar Kut; Chawn leh lam festivals of eating, drinking, singing and dancing; and also on return of a brave warrior (Pasaltha) with the head of an enemy, they would hold an orgy. They would carouse and make merry with zu. But one remarkable, fact is that though zu was used widely and freely among the Mizos in bygone days, the new generation drank zu only during the festivals and the occasions of ‘chawn leh lam’ (feasting and dancing); and even then, when they had the opportunity to drink zu, they drank moderately. They were never found intoxicated or tipsy.

Their Zu Drinking Customs

Their drinking customs were good, proper and beautiful. We who regard ourselves as modern, and civilized have a lot to learn from them and to emulate. They gave specific appellations to their drinking customs.

Intawk

Every village had its big cup (Nopui) or its Chief's cup (Lal no); but the size of the cups depend on the villages, so they were not uniform, standardized or fixed like the 'tlang no' or 'no leng.' The Nopui was made from the horn of a wild gayal known to the Mizos as Tumpang or Se-le. In some villages it was formed from a large se-ki (horn of a domesticated mithun). It could hold or contain almost one litre of zu.

When they drank zu together on ordinary occasions, they scooped up a cup of zu from the pot or basin using the Chief's cup or the Nopui, and first of all the Chief was served. After he had swigged and tossed off the zu they would dip another cup of zu and hand it to the Chief again. The Chief would 'tawk' the second cup to the person of his choice whom he favoured most of all. 'Tawk' means 'give.'

After the person who had been 'tawk' (given) the zu had partaken of it, he would scoop up a third cup, and tawk it to another person whom he favoured. After that, the zu was served in community cups to all those who were present.

When they drank 'sumdeng zu', the Val-Upa (leader of bachelor) would take the first Nopui, but without drinking, he would 'tawk' the Nopui to altruistic young man who was to be honoured. The young man would quaff the zu; but he was not allowed to 'tawk' or give a Nopui of zu to another person, because it was not customary to do so. After that, the zu was served to all who were present in 'no leng' which were cups or vessels that held an ordinary measure of liquor (We have already mentioned the 'Nopui' in the another chapter).

Inleh

When they drank zu together in a house, they sat lengthwise in two rows. One row lined against the side wall on the side where the fireplace was situated; and the other lined against the wall opposite the fireplace. The zu was served in cups along the two rows. When someone from one of these rows received a cup of zu, he would give it to a person he favoured saying, “Ka leh a che” (I give you my cup of zu).

When another cup of zu is served, he is allowed to take and drink it because he gave his first cup to his friend. When his friend was served a cup of zu which was his legitimate share, he would leh (give) his cup of zu in reciprocation (inlehna) to his friend who had leh (given) his first cup to him; so the person who had ‘leh’ his cup of zu first, received and drank two cup of zu! ‘Leh’ simply means ‘give’ and ‘inleh’ means reciprocate.

Inkhawh

When the young man was served a cup of zu in a vessel containing or ordinary stipulated measure (No leng), he would give it to a friend saying, “Ka no ka leh a che” (I give you my cup), his friend, who had already been served, and was holding his cup of zu would reply, “I am also holding a spear (cup of zu), I hurl (khawh) it at you.” So saying, he would reciprocate and give his share of zu to the one who had “leh” (given) him his own cup of zu.

When zu was served again, they were both entitled to receive and drink a second cup of zu each. ‘Inkhawh’ means ‘giving each other.’ It signifies reciprocal action.

Inchawi rural

A young man gives his share of a cup of zu to a friend. While he is holding the cup he was given, his share arrives. It is not convenient and right to hold two cups of zu; so he gives (leh)

his share to his friend who gave him his saying, “My cup has arrived take it and lets ‘inchawi rural.’ Inchawirual’ means drinking together at the same time.

Thal

After they all had been served once, a man would scoop up a cup of zu from the basin with his own hand and give (leh) it to a person of his own choice whom he favoured most of all. Favoursing a friend in that way was called ‘Thal.’

‘Thal’ was never done for one’s self. And besides, it would only be done by a person who was able to replenish the supply of zu at the party when they ran out of zu. And when they used up the supply of zu at that particular party, eventually and naturally, they were the ones who fetched another pot of zu from their house.

Sawhken

This custom was practiced when a few persons drank beer together. It was not done at a big function or get together. If they realized they had only a small amount of zu, they would say, “Today we have only a modicum or small amount of zu; so lets go ‘sawh keh’ (serve or distribute it equally). It meant that no one was to be favoured and that the zu would be divided equally among them.

Inleh se-ki

It was not done or practiced by a common person or any and everyone. It could be given only by a person who could fetch a pot of zu when the supply of zu dwindled and ran out; or a person who could buy a pot of zu to replenish the supply. Generally, it was given by the owner of the zu they were drinking on that particular occasion. Usually, when a beer drink was in progress, many of the participants were want to ‘inleh’ their friends or those whom they favoured; and so, while one person had drunk only one cup, a popular prominent or notable person would have been given and imbibed enough zu to cause

him to be inebriated. There was a great gap between the person who had not been favoured or given a cup of zu, and the person who was popular.

On such occasions, he who was in a position to do so, practiced the olden days Mizo custom of giving the 'inleh se-ki'. After all who were present had been served in 'no leng' cups, without calculation, estimation or any thoughts whether there was enough beer left, he would say, "Scoop up a cup of zu, and bring it to me. I'd like to 'leh-se-ki' Mr. X Y Z." When they brought a cup of zu, he would "leh" (give) it to the person he had in mind.

'Inleh se-ki' had nothing to do whatsoever with friendship. The host or the owner of the pot of zu, would be alert and look around the room to see if there was anyone who was shy, reserved or reticent; or a person who had been given less zu than the other people who were present. The Mizo custom of 'Inleh se-ki' was used and manipulated to close or span the breach or gap between the haves and the have nots. It was used by the owner of the house or the owner of the pot to see that none of his guests should feel small, left out, abandoned, feel at sea, neglected or ostracised.

It was a way of showing kindness and respect, consideration and love for those who had been perfunctorily and heedlessly disregarded or ignored. It was used to make all the guests feel at ease, comfortable and satisfied. It was a high form of courtesy and lovely custom which enhanced the beautiful pattern of the Mizos way of life.

The present generation has a lot to learn from their ancestors; and the customs they practiced when they drank zu together. In their whole way of living; their deportment; and in every facet of their lives, the youths in bygone days regarded drunkenness as improper. It was only those who were assuredly and undoubtedly old and aged that were intemperate, immoderate and got drunk.

The young men drank zu only during various annual festivals and ‘Chawng’ (The ‘Chawng’ was a sacrifice three days of feasting and dancing, given by an individual or a family). As for the olden days women, young ladies and girls, could be regarded almost as teetotalers. It could be said that though they imbibed pots and pots of zu, the alcohol consumed did not generate any disagreement, quarrels or altercations.

Sometimes, now and then, if a young man did become too drunk, he was chastised by the community. A group of young men would lead him to a dark secluded place and punish him. He would never know who trounced him. In the end, one or two young men would take him home and explain to his family that, “A female spook or bogey woman threw him down over her shoulder,” or that “An evil spirit or demon had filliped his testicle.”

His parents would never dare take offence or get angry. In fact, they would feel ashamed and sheepish instead. When the young man woke up and became sober, in more ways than one, he would go so far as to pack up and move to a village far away from the place where he was ridiculed and punishment was inflicted upon him for being so senselessly drunk.

Though the standard of our ancestors was very simple, they were careful and circumspect. Our ancestors followed and obeyed those customs to the letter. They were afraid they would get a bad reputation; disgrace; and they would lose prestige. They were also afraid of being criticised. When they drank beer together, though some of them drank enough to become garrulous, those who prepared and served the zu were clear – minded and simply followed the customs and traditions of our ancestors in an orderly way.

We who regard ourselves as more advanced, more developed, more progressed and civilized, we, the Mizo of today, in our sloppy, slovenly, slipshod ways, have infringed, violated and transgressed the good laws and customs of our forefathers. One of the earliest

Superintendents of Mizoram, John Shakespeare said to have made this comment, “The Mizo are masters in the art of drinking zu.” This is a true and worthy saying. They knew how to drink zu and how to live. It is a true and good commendation of the customs and traditions of the Mizo.

23. VIEWS ABOUT SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

When we ponder and think carefully about the old days of the Mizo, we realize that supernatural beings played an important role and were deeply and firmly embedded in their lives. During work in the jungle, procuring some food, to hunt or shoot big game; and even when they worked in their jhooms, spiritual beings were always evident. It would be said that supernatural beings intruded into the whole life of our ancestors.

The number of spirits known to our forebears is legion. There are so many of them; and besides, we will never be able to know all of them completely. We will learn only about those that are prominent, and are still mentioned in the stories and songs which have been written and composed upto the present day. The supernatural, or spirits known to them can be classified generally into two groups or kinds:

1. Good, beneficent spirits,
2. Bad, vicious, malevolent spirits.

The Good Spirits

These supernatural beings did not hurt human beings, neither did they cause adversity, misfortune, ruin, tragedy or death. It is said that they associated and had fellowship with homo sapiens; and sometimes they even fell in love with human beings and possessed them. The most prominent and well known among them are:

Mai-mi

It is said to be a harmless spirit that mesmerizes a person and makes him incapable of self-control and self-defense

especially while he is sleeping. It causes a temporary nightmarish paralysis.

Mizo children often challenged Mai-mi. They would wrap or roll themselves in a sheet, lie on the floor and chant: “Mai-mi oh, mesmerize me, mesmerize me!” They would repeat and call out to this benign spirit. It was a popular amusement and game they often played. Even nowadays, if a person is weak and bedridden, and feels as if an invisible force is holding him down, the old folks would comment. “Mai-mi is the cause of your temporary paralysis!”

Khua-vang

The old people believed that the Khua-vangs were invisible spiritual entities that existed all around them in their neighbourhood, environs and vicinity. They believed that they married and that there were Khua-vang families. They also believed that the Khua-vangs were guardian spirits that protected human beings and were said to be made by the Khua-vangs to distinguish them from other people for some reason or other; and these black moles are called ‘Khua-vang chhinchhiah’ (Khua-vang marks).

It seems that the olden days Mizo believed that the Khuavangs had power over and controlled the earth and mankind. Human beings were silenced when a Khua-vang moved among them or came near them. They made people forget what they were going to say. That is why, when people are sitting together and conversing and chatting noisily – suddenly they become silent so that they can hear a pin drop. This lull in the conversation is known in Mizo as ‘Khua-vang kal lai’ (A Khua-vang is passing through the room).

The old people also believed that the surface of the earth was formed by Khua-vangs; and that streams, ravines, gullies, hill ranges, mountain ranges and valleys were readymade ‘boundaries and demarcations fixed by the Khua-vangs.’ Our ancestors used them for demarcating a Chief’s jurisdiction, village areas, jhooms, orchards and cultivation plots (leipuis – that is,

gardens situated about a mile away from the village). They never transgressed and always used these natural boundaries.

The old folks used to say that a Khua-vang would sometimes materialize and appear as an old woman. They believed that if they humored her or pleased her, she would bless them; and that when they chagrined, offended, vexed or annoyed her, she would hurt, harm, degrade, or ruin them. Some of you may have read the story of Liandova and his brother who were orphans. One day, when they were weeding their jhoom, they saw a crow carrying a snake in its back. They shouted and the crow dropped the snake. They wrapped the snake in planting leaves and kept it and took care of it.

It happened that the snake was a Khua-vang baby or child; and a Khua-vang manifested and revealed herself and appeared before the Liando brothers and claimed the snake. She was so pleased, she increased their paddy crop. Even nowadays in Mizoram there is a snake called 'Khua-vang snake.'

Phei-chham

'Phei' means leg, and 'chham' means deficient of. The old people believed that this supernatural being had only one leg, so they named it 'Phei-chham.' Pheichhams lived and wandered about individually along the banks of lonely streams and uninhabited jungles and moors. Its single footprint was said to be seen in the sands of lonely forest streams. Because of possessed only one lower limb, they believed that it often fell down and was unable to stand again on its own accord or without help.

If anyone came upon a helpless Phei-chham and took pity on it and gave assistance, the Phei-chham ask him, "What do you want?" And like a one-legged Jinn or Genie of the Arabian Nights, he would grant anything that the person who helped him wished for. That is why, even nowadays in Mizo society, if a person received a windfall, won a lottery prize, or received a shower of blessing, they would exclaimed, "Why! Its because you have caught a Phei-Chham!"

La-si

Our ancestry regarded the La-si as the greatest among the good spirits. They have a lot to say about the La-si. They say that the Lasi are beautiful. They also say that the La-si have power over and control all wild beasts and all domesticated animals. Though they believed that Lasi could be found everywhere, they regarded Mount Lurh and Mount Tan as the special abode of the Lasis. Lurh and Tan were the Olympus of the Lasis.

When famous intrepid hunters roamed in the jungles procuring food or hunting wild beasts, the Lasis would scrutinize and eye them carefully. They would fall in love with some of those hunters. They would materialize before those whom they were infatuated with, and tempt and seduce them into matrimony. Pasalthas who were married to Lasis were said to be possessed by a Lasi, and were able to shoot or bag many animals. The old folks believed that the Lasis drove animals towards the hunters whom they favoured or were infatuated with, or married or possessed.

The king of the Lasis was Lalchungnunga. He fell in love with Chawngtinleri, the beautiful, ravishing sister of Lianchea, who lived in the village called Lamsial. The fairy king sent his subjects to ask Lianchea to allow him to marry his sister. Lianchea had a wonderful dream in which he saw a valley full of various kinds of wild beasts. The Lasis told him that if he allowed their king to marry his sister he would be able to shoot all the animals in that valley. Lianchea agreed to let his sister marry Lalchungnunga. There is a song sung in the 'Zawl zai' tune. It was sung by the Lasis on the wedding day of their king :

*"People of Lurhpui and Tanpui,
What work today?
We'll not work today.
Lalchungnunga weds a mortal beauty,
It's a holiday!"*

And so, Chawngtinleri became the Queen of the fairies or Lasis. She rules all the wild beasts and all domesticated animals.

That is why our forebears believed when they were successful in a hunt or chase that it was Chawngtinleri who had given the animal to them. When our ancestors celebrated the taking of the head of a wild beast in a hunt, they used to this song. (It have been composed after the year 1894, more than a century ago):

*“Before Zion’s sun shone well,
All tribes recall:
Animals were born in Buannel,
Chawngtinleri – she made them all.”*

Just like human being, Chawngtinleri used to weave cloth. The top of the wrap was fixed on the tops of Tan and Lurh (Tan and Lurh is in the east of Khawbung). The bottom of the wrap was fixed on the twin peaks of a mountain near Zopui, which is situated beyond Lunglei. She employed the Murpui, a large species of the Vamur (swallow) to set up the wrap of cotton for weaving. Flying swiftly to and from they would set it up in no time. Incidentally, the name of the mountain near Zopui is called, “Chawngtinleri puan thin tlang” (the mount where Chawngtinleri shook the cloth). There is also a ‘Lengzem’ love song which is as followed:

*They say she swallows in the sky,
Set up Chawngtinleri wrap;
My love for you also will never die,
Nor will it ever wrap.*

There are many instance of humans being possessed by Lasis. We will mention only two prominent ones: Long long ago, in the days of yore, there lived in the village of Lamsial, a man named Thasiama. Lasis appeared to him and possessed him and told him to make a wish. He asked for longevity and his wish was granted. He lived to be a very old man and is regarded as the Methuselah of the Mizo. It is said that he teethed quite a number of times and collected a kawi-bean basket full of his old teeth. Upto the present day, on a hillock situated high up, close to the blackboard-like formidable cliff of Tan, in an almost inaccessible place, there is a well known spot called “The hill where

Thasiama's mithun gave birth to a calf" (Thasiama se no neihna tlang).

It is said that Thasiama eventually died of disgust at what he considered the atavistic, retrograde, reversive conduct of the rising generations around him!

Buizova was and is the ugliest man among the Mizos. One day, he went hunting alone in the jungles near Tan mountain. Unexpectedly, he came upon some Lasi maidens all busy weaving. Undaunted and because they were so beautiful, he courted them and became intimate with them and was finally possessed by them. They taught him how to sing, and he became the best and most famous vocalist and crooner among the Mizo. When he crooned from the bottom of his heart, the branches of the trees droop and bent down and shed all their leaves!

One day, while he was courting the Lasis in the jungle far away from his village, oblivious of the passing of time, he suddenly realized that it was late. So after bidding the Lasi maidens adieu, he hurried home when the sun had already set and was hidden and obscured from view behind the mountains. He trudged along and soon lost his way in the black, gloomy, somber darkness. At his wit's end he composed and sang this song, heart-rendingly, pathetically and piteously:

*"The sun gone down, in darkness I roam,
Dear, sweet maidens, oh please lead me home."*

*"Sweet maidens, if you do take me home,
Surely, I'll boast to mother at home!"*

The song he sang, and the way he sang it, touched and plucked the heartstrings of the Lasi maidens. They sympathised and took pity on him and led him all the way to his village.

Besides the ones we have mentioned above, there are quite a number of other good, beneficent spirits which were known to our forebears. However, they do not throw much light on the olden days Mizo way of life; and there are little or no facts mentioned about them in the literature and songs of our old folks.

So, let us call it a day, and close this account of the good and benign ethereal, occult, supernatural, unworldly beings known to our animistic, superstitious forebears.

Malevolent Sprits

Tau

The Tau was regarded by our ancestors as an evil spirit. They lived in great fear of it. All we know about these evil spirits is that during the day they spread themselves out on the branches of trees growing on cliffs and basked in the sun the whole day; and that during the night, holding torches for fire-brands, they roamed about in groups on the cliffs and in the jungle.

Tu-lum

The Tu-lum is an evil spirit about which strange stories are told. It was said to be in the habit of entering into the bodies of dead persons, specially those who had died an unnatural death, such as falling from trees and precipices and animating them. The old folks say that the animated dead behaved in strange and peculiar ways. They referred to them as 'Tu-lum lut' (entered and possessed by a Tu-lum). They also say that the Tu-lum possessed the corpse for a short time and then came out of it; and that the cadaver stopped being animated when the Tu-lum left it.

Among the wild beasts the bear is the only animal that does not respect a human's face. When it mauls a person, it bites the face and gauges a person's dyes and disfigures his face. Our old folks likened the bear to a Tu-lum. That is why in an old song the bear is described as "Tu-lum leng... Phuaivawm" (The rough bear strolling about like a Tu-lum!). There is also a species of squirrel, which is exceptionally large and black to be found in Mizoram. It is called a 'Hei Tu-lum' (Tu-lum squirrel).

Khaw-hring

Our old folks believed that the Khaw-hring was an evil

covetous spirit. It coveted peoples' possessions and entered the body of a member of the family and possessed him. The possessed person suffered colic pains, and the Khaw-hring made its demands through the speech organs of the one who was possessed and was suffering unbearable pain. When a person felt a sudden attack and suffered about of colic pains, without delay his family would interrogate him immediately. "Who are you? What do you want?" And the Khaw-hring would speak through the one possessed and tell them, "I am so and so; and I want this or that!" It would mention the name of a person and also mentioned something they had that it wanted. If they gave it to the one with the 'evil eye,' the Khaw-hring left the body of the person who had fallen down in pain, and he would be cured of his colic ailment.

Sometimes a psychic person was able to 'Tai' (exorcise) the evil eye or Khaw-hring. It was done as follows: The exorcist took a little bit of cold water in a gourd ladle (dipper) and after sundry incantations he would add to it a pinch of soot or dirt of any kind from each of the three stones which supported the pot over the family fire. He would also add three live embers or burning coals from the fire. The water was then given to the affected person to drink. In that way they would 'Tai' the Khaw-hring. It was said that not all, but some, were cured by this method of Khaw-hring 'Tai.'

After the Mizo were converted to Christianity, they used the word 'Tawngtai' meaning to pray or say a prayer. The word 'tawngtai' (pray) has its roots in the olden days Mizo word 'Tai' (to exorcise).

Generally, it was a good looking young lady who was accused of being possessed of a Khaw-hring Evil eye. It was done to defame her character, and she would find herself an object of distaste and fear to her friends and neighbours. If she was unmarried, her bad reputation would deprive her of a husband and make her life unhappy.

One outstanding fact to be noted is that when A.W. Davis, was appointed Superintendent of North Mizoram in the year 1892

to 1893, he made various laws and enforced them upon the people of Mizoram. One of the laws he enforced that: "It is forbidden that anyone be accused of being the possessor or owner of Khaw-hring." He also proclaimed that anyone who disregarded, broke, violated, infringed or transgressed against this law, he or she would be punished severely. From that time onwards, the evil spirit that our forebears believed in – the Evil Eye, the Khaw-hring came to an end and disappeared for good.

Khaw-mu

Our old folks believed that the Khaw-mu was a malignant spirit that abducted, kidnapped, led or carried away human beings. When a person got lost in the jungle, and did not know where he was nor what to do our old folks would say that he was 'Khawmu chawibo' (carried off by a Khaw-mu).

When they went to search for the person who was lost, they saw no footprints and no signs. So they believed that he had been carried off. Some who were carried off were lost for good; but some were found after they had searched for a number of days.

Phung

To the Mizo, the Phung is a spirit, ghost, bogey, spook or ogress. It is generally regarded as a female. It was in the habit of appearing as a terrible, frightening apparition. The old folks believed it was a malignant spirit. They described it as huge, black and hairy. According to the place where it was seen and its haunts and its form and appearance, different appellants were given to these bogey women. Phungs that haunted the streets and outskirts of a village were said to be tall, towering and at the same time swaying, bending and drooping. So it was called a 'Drooping Phung' (Phungkur). It was said that it could step over three houses in one stride, so it was also called a 'Three-house-strider' (In thum kar).

Phungs that frequented the village and haunted the valleys

and lanes between the houses were said to be very black, very ugly, hairy and hirsute; with teeth as large as 'fang-ra' beans, which were as big as a man's thumb! They were known as 'Tualphung' (Local Phungs). They believed that the 'Tualphungs' were especially fond of eating 'Pi-ring' (small conical land snail); and that when they came upon a pi-ring, the Phungs would grab, and fight and tussle with each other to gain possession of it. That is why, when two or more persons grab and fight and bicker over the possession of something, the Mizo say, "Phung zinga pi-ring vawrh ang mai" (It is like tossing a land snail among Phungs).

Some Phungs lived in the jungle in the hollow of big trees. Their main diet was the flower and buds of bananas and plantains. Though the Mizos of long ago were afraid of these dreadful Phungs, they had someone among them whom they regarded as a hero. His full name was 'Chhur-bura' but he was popularly known as 'Chhura.' He is a famous character in Mizo folktale, and was noted for his stupidity and industry. We must remember that Chhura was not afraid of Phungs, and that he dared to intimidate and challenge them.

Chawm

The Chawm is an evil spirit. The old folks say that it was seen in the jungle in ravines and gullies; and that it was a dreadful malignant spirit. The Chawms the old folks came across were 'Chawmnus' (female Chawm) and described as gigantic, with long, large, pendulous mammary glands; with long, untidy, unkempt, tousled hair; and she was black as sable, charcoal or a negress. Though the form, figure and physique of the Chawmnu was terrifying, our forebears never mentioned any of its grisly, gruesome or horrible actions and deeds.

Tuihuai

The Mizos of long ago, believed that every large and deep pool was haunted by evil water spirits or demons. The water demon was called a 'Tui-huai'. The water demon could change itself into an insect or animal; and sometimes it took the form of

human being. Usually they did not hurt people; but if a person annoyed, irked, provoked or vexed them, the olden days Mizo believed that the water demons took his life. There are many legends about these evil water spirits, but we will take a look at only one of them; because it describes quite well the malevolent, irascible characteristics of the water sprite.

Long long ago, the male population of a village went to the Mat river for community fishing using toxin herbs. There was a deep, dark, forbidding pool which no one dared to plunge into. But among them there was a young man named Vanzema. He was an excellent swimmer, and was also brave, courageous, courteous and intrepid. He practiced Tlawmngaihna and was regarded as a Pasaltha. He dived into that deep pool; swam to the bottom and caught the large edible tasty fish such as the Nghatum, which were intoxicated and stupefied due to the herbal toxins. Once more he dived into the pool, and encountered a water demon in the form of an old man.

The old man was busy at the bottom of the pool. He was splitting cane or bamboo strips for weaving or tying purposes. The demon looked up and spoke casually to Vanzema, “Junior, if you don’t want to die, don’t ever come here.” Vanzema was terrified! He surfaced immediately and swam to the bank of the Mat river. When his friends told him to plunge into the pool again, he refused, and said that he was definitely not going to enter it again. He told them that there was an old man splitting bamboo strips – and that the demon had threatened him. His friends said that he was fibbing, and that he had made up the story to cover the fact that he had lost his nerve. They scoffed at him and accused him of being a coward; and said that he was discourteous and did not know the meaning of Tlawmngaihna.

Vanzema feared the water demon, but he was more afraid of losing his reputation. He said, “All right, I’ll dive in again. Tie this rope around my waist. After I plunge in, when I shake or pull the rope, draw me up and out immediately.” He dived and swam down, down to the bottom of the murky pool. When the

signal came, the rope quivered. At last, they managed to pull him out – But he was headless! They believed that the water demon had strangled and decapitated Vanzema.

Even at present there is a deep pool situated downstream, not far from the bridge that spans the Mat river, on the way to Lunglei. This pool is called ‘Vanzema pool.’ And there is also a Mizo maxim or proverb which says, “Vanzema lost his life, because he was afraid of losing his reputation and prestige.” (Tlawmmakah Vanzema a thi).

Tlanghuai

The Mizo of long ago believed that mountains and precipices were the abodes of demons which they called ‘Tlanghuai.’ Some of the well known mountain demons were ‘Tiauchhumpa’ and ‘Darkualpa of Phawngpui’ (Blue mountain). They were said to be brothers, and that they took care of the animals on that particular mountain.

The demons of Mawmrang mountain were Sahmula and his daughter Lengthuampuii. High up on mount Mawmrang there is a cliff and on top of that cliff, there is a big flat rock known as ‘Sahmula tual,’ (tual means front yard) because people believed that Sahmula, the demon of mount Mawmrang and his daughter used to stroll on this flat rock. The demon of mount Chalfilh was Chirhchohpuii, and the demon of mount Reiek was Khawluahlali.

Sometimes these mountain demons got married and for the wedding price of the bride, they gave gibbon apes, morning mists, thual-thu (an annual shrub with very large bean-like leaves and dark orange coloured bean-like flower and fruit), and the hawk called ‘mu-ngek’ because its cry sounded like ‘ngek’. It builds its nest on precipices. For the wedding gown, it is said that they used pine trees.

Our ancestors also say that they disagreed sometimes and did not see eye to eye. Wars broke out between them and battles were fought. Once upon a time, the Chhawrpial mountain demons declared war on the Reiek mountain demons, and invaded Reiek.

They called the Tlawng river demons to assist them and to knock and dash against Reiek mountain to destroy it. The Tlawng demons did their utmost and dashed against Reiek fiercely with all their might; but they failed in their attempt, and the Tlawng river had to curve and bend and meander in its course – and this sinuous, bending, turning, zigzag part of the river Tlawng came to be known and is still known as ‘the Peevish Tlawng’ (Tlawng nuar).

Sihhuai

A ‘sih’ is a small spring generally regarded by the Mizo of long ago as being haunted by evil spirits known as ‘Sihhuai.’ They believed that at least one Sihhuai family occupied each spring. Therefore it was considered unlucky and inauspicious to have a jhoom on the land where there was a sih spring. When they jhoomed near a ‘sih’, they had to do it only after a sacrifice called the ‘luh’ sacrifice. After the ‘luh’ was performed, they regarded it as safe to jhoom the area; because the sinhuai had been appeased. They even went so far as to say that the sihs were so pleased, they would be as happy as a child, and laugh like a child. It is depicted in the works of a Mizo song, ‘Sih nau ang nui zain’ (Laughing like a sih child).

Sih springs generally rose in muddy soil, which usually remained damp all through the dry season. The water was generally warm and blackish.

The sih is generally associated with ‘chham ek’ which is the reddish deposit found at the bottom of some pools or where water had flowed. The poetical metaphor in the Mizo language ‘chham ang zal’ has its roots in a very interesting folktale. The old folks say that long, long ago, there was a man named Manmasia. Manmasia and his wife had a jhoom in an area where there was quite a large sih spring. His wife planted ‘Ting’ all round the sih spring.

‘Ting’ is a hill indigo or Assam indigo (*strobilanthes flaccidifolius*). It grows to a height of three feet or more, and the leaves are boiled and squeezed to obtain indigo dye. When it is

boiled over and over again many times, it produces a black dye.

The *ting* planted by Manmasia's wife flourished extremely well beyond her expectations, that it filled her heart with joy. But like the Mizo proverb, 'Chicken is grieved, wild cat is overjoyed,' the Sihhuais who had their abode in the spring were grieved.

'Chham,' the chief of the Sihhuais lived in that pool. The roots of the *ting* plants spread out and crisscrossed and got entained. Some roots found their way into Chham's nostrils, and he became ill. The exit and entrance to the spring was obstructed by the entangled roots; and Chham had to lie down or recline all the time in the sih spring. His subordinates had to tend and look after him. They had to feed him and even clean him. It is from this old folks tale that the poetical expression 'reclining like Chham' (chham ang zal) had its origin. It is said that in the end, the furious, vindictive chief of the evil Sihhuai spirits, Chham, took the life of Manmasia's wife.

Our ancestors believed that there were many kind of 'Huais' (demons), such as Bunghuai (Banyan tree demons), Lungpui huai (Rock demons) and many others. But it is better for us to end this account here. So let us call it a day and close this account about good and evil spirits, and the views of our forebears about the supernatural, the natural and other world beings.

24. SACRIFICIAL RITES AND CUSTOMS

Our ancestors used to perform various sacrificial rites. Since there were many, it is difficult to trace all of them completely. They performed sacrifices to get a good harvest, to be successful in hunting animals; to cure ailments; to keep in good health, and to live a long life. First of all it would be good to discuss their sacrificial paraphernalia.

Thiam hla (Incantations)

For the various sacrifices there were different incantations. These incantations were known, memorized and used by the Sadawts who were private exorcists or priests especially employed by the ruling chiefs. Incantations were also memorized and used by the Bawlpus who were also exorcists and priests. They prized and valued these incantations. When a sacrifice was performed, a Sadawt or Bawlpu prepared, directed and led the ceremony.

Chhembur

The Chhembur was a combined wind instrument made of a small gourd; big enough to be used as a flask for carrying nicotine water (liquid snuff) in. A few grains of raw rice was put into the gourd. Before chanting an incantation, and now and then in the course of the sacrifice, the Sadawt or Bawlpu would blow the Chhembur and shaket it like a rattle.

A serh

(The parts of a sacrificial animal or fowl dedicated to the god or spirit to whom it was offered).

For every sacrifice they offered certain parts of the fowl or animal was set aside for the spirit. If it was a chicken, the beak, the feet and the two tips of the wing bones were offered. If it was a four footed animal, the four feet, a little bit of the liver and heart and the tail were offered as a sacrifice. Sometimes the head of the animal was included.

Thil Lem (Model)

For some sacrifices small models of a gong or a mithun were included in the sacrificial paraphernalia. These models were made entirely of clay.

Maicam (altar)

A small alter woven with bamboo strips was used. It was like a shallow, rectangular basket with legs like a table.

Thei bial

This was a small piece of bamboo fashioned like a Mizo bamboo spoon. The end of the hands were pointed. It was fixed upright in the ground in a Daibawl sacrifice.

The-lep

This article was made of two small sticks, the size of match sticks, which were formed into a tiny cross. Starting from the centre and working outwards, red and black yarn were set alternately and closely on the cross like wraps, till it formed a small square. This square was hung on a string or thread and the other end of the thread was fixed or tied to the end of a thick flexible stick. This little contraption was planted in a crack on the erected bamboo spoon (thei bial). Due to the weight of the red and black square (the-lep), the flexible stick bowed or bent down, and the the-lep would swing to and fro with the wind or breeze.

Another thing they used in a sacrifice were small pieces of bamboo. They were as long as the width of a man's palm. These pieces of bamboo were carved with a knife and made crooked

and zigzag. During the sacrifice, some were fixed in the ground erect, and some were placed horizontally on them. The paraphernalia for the sacrifice was prepared at home beforehand; and the sick person to be cured had to touch each and every one of these articles. We will not explain or describe these article any more, and only their names will be mentioned when we describe the various sacrificial ceremonies. The various sacrifices performed by our ancestors could be classified into three parts.

Sacrifices Performed for the Village

Long, long ago, in the Mizo villages, three kinds of sacrifices were performed for the inhabitants. The chief's Sadawt would attend to it, arrange it, and perform it. If he was unable to do it, or if he was absent, a seer, or a prophet living in the village took his place and performed it. Let us take a look at these three sacrifices performed for the village.

a) Kawngpui Siam

The object of this sacrifice was to ask blessings for the villagers so that they would be successful in hunting and trapping wild animals; and in fighting against their enemies. A pig or a chicken was offered as a sacrifice. That is, a pig for one year and a chicken for the next year, and so on, alternately. The village elders would take turns in rotation in supplying, donating or contributing the animal or fowl required for the sacrifice.

Three, five or seven persons were selected to follow or accompany the Sadawt, and to take part in the sacrificial ceremony. They would select especially and particularly those who had 'mal sawm' included in their names. 'Mal sawm' means 'blessings.' The place where the 'Kawngpui siam' sacrifice was held was on the main path just outside the southern entrance to the village. The sacrifice was performed generally in the evening.

When the Sadawt and the followers left the Chief's house, the Sadawt would carry the pig or fowl, some ash and a nettled

satchel. The others would carry bamboo – can filled with water which held about a gallon of water, a gourd bottle of zu (beer or fermented liquor), and utensils for cooking the pig or chicken that was to be sacrificed. To facilitate comprehension, let us suppose that Vunga, Zika and Kunga were the Chiefs of the village. The Sadawt would chant an incantation:

*Lets bind, lets bind
 Lets bind Vunga's spirit,
 And Vunga's family;
 Fall not beneath anyone,
 Fall not beneath enemies;
 Bind him against all knives,
 Bind him against all spears,
 I make a road,
 I make a main road;
 To bring in enemies' heads,
 To bring in the wild beasts heads.
 A village falls! A village falls! –
 Zika's village falls!
 Kunga's village falls!*

According to the custom of our forefathers, a species of the chestnut tree (*Castanopsis tribulodes*) had been planted one above and one below the path. After the Sadawt had chanted the incantation, they would kill the small pig and impale the legs – severed below the knees – onto the trunks of the chestnut trees. If it was a chicken, the wings were impaled. Then they would cook and consume the pig or chicken, with the exception of the parts offered to the spirits. It was forbidden to take even a small portion of it home.

After that, they made circles of 'vawm hrui' creepers and placed them on the path between the two chestnut trees. They sprinkled ash in circles and smoothed the surfaces of the ash. It would be left over night to see what kind of foot prints appeared

on them. The Sadawt would pick up a few small stones and put them in his netted satchel and they would return to the chief's house.

When they reached the Chief's house, they would stand outside and say, "Open the door, open the door." Those inside would never open it immediately. They would inquire, "Are you good or bad guests and strangers?" And the Sadawt would reply, "We are beneficent guests and strangers, we bring human heads and the heads of wild beasts. Our names are Increase and Blossom. We bring accrual, accumulation, bloom, prosperity and success." It was then that those inside would open the door and warmly welcome them.

When they entered they would say, "Bring a big, shallow, open basket (kho-pui)." They would bring a shallow basket and hold it out and the Sadawt would take the small stones out of his satchel and put them one by one into the basket saying, "Here's a human head; and here's a wild beast's head," and the people in the house would be very pleased!

The next morning they would go to the entrance of the village to examine the ashes they had sprinkled. If they found foot prints of wild animals, they would rejoice, because they believed that they would be successful in hunting and trapping; but if there were foot prints of human beings or tiger, they would regard it as a bad omen, and the "Kawngpui siam" sacrifice would be performed all over again, till the augury tallied with their wishes.

On the day of the 'Kawngpui siam' was performed, it was proclaimed and announced in the village streets by the village announcer (Tlang-au), and all the inhabitants had to stop work and observe a holiday. When those who had gone on a journey and those who had gone far away to hunt big game, returned and realized that the ceremony had been held during their absence, they would be furious and exclaim, "They don't want us to live in this village!" Some went so far as to move to another village. And if the first head of the animal brought into the village after the 'Kawngpui siam' ceremony had been performed was of the

larger and more dangerous wild animals hunted (Sa hrang), such as the bear, the elephant, the wild gayal or the wild boar, they would also observe a holiday besides, the vigil of 'Kawngpui siam' sacrifice.

(b) *Fa-no Dawi*

It was an annual sacrifice and was performed to protect the young growing rice crops on the village jhooms from disease, and for the inhabitants of the village to obtain a good and large crop of rice. Every year a black chicken was contributed by one of the village elders in rotation. The day was observed as a holiday.

The sacrifice was performed and offered near the rice bin in the house of the Chief. The Sadawt would chant the following:

*“May our jhoom work this year run smoothly,
May our youths be flat footed and blight.”*

Then he would kill the black chicken. They would offer the parts set aside to the spirits, and cook what was left, and the Chief and his family and anyone he favoured would consume it.

(c) *Khaw-kheng Thawi*

A sacrificial ceremony for rain was performed when there was a long drought. They made many small clay models of mithuns and put them on the main path at the entrance to the village.

These sacrifices – the Kawngpui siam, the Fa-no daw and the Khaw-kheng thawi, were performed to ask for the blessing. They were performed for the welfare of the whole village. But strange to say, they did not seem to call upon God.

Sacrifices Performed in The Homes

Our ancestors believed that every person had a supernatural master or owner. This spirit was called a 'Khal' or a 'Khaltu'. It sported with the person it owned and expressed its affection or hate in whatever way it had to. When it was displeased, the person suffered various ailments. But even when they enjoyed good health, our ancestors used to offer 'Khal' sacrifices to the

spirits. Then, it was not called a ‘Khal’ sacrifice. It was known as ‘Khal hmang’ (manipulating the ‘Khal’). They used the ‘Khal’ brought it into play and took advantage of it.

There were many kinds of ‘Khal hmang.’ Some were named after the animal or fowl that was offered. Sometimes it had its own special appellant. Some of the more prominent ones were as follows: Ar khal (Chicken khal); Vawkte khal (young pig khal); Kel khal (goat khal); Khal chung (upper khal); sometimes known as Khal chuam (pet or favourite khal).

In the Kel khal, Khalpui and Khal chung, a goat was killed and the tail was suspended round the neck of the person for whom it was offered. Then there were the Arpui khal (in which a black hen was offered); Van chung khal (in which a red rooster and a young pig were offered); Hmar khal, in which a sacrifice was offered to restore good fortune or skill in hunting, which the hunter once had enjoyed, but in which he had lost his prowess. All the original Khals were known collectively as Khal Tluang. Among these ‘Khals’ we shall describe only three for the present.

Vawk te Khal (Young pig khal)

When they made use of the Vawk te khal, before the pig was killed the Bawlpu (exorcist, priest) chanted the following incantation. Let us suppose the Zeltluang sacrifice was being offered for a person named Hranga:

*“Oh Khal, accept the Zeltluang I offer,
Hranga’s Khal, accept the Zeltluang I offer,
Hranga’s Khal of Mt. Lurhpui, accept Zeltluang I offer,
Hranga’s Khal of Mt. Tan, accept the Zeltluang I offer,
Hranga’s Khal where Thasiama’s mithun begot,
accept the Zeltluang I offer,
Hranga’s Leikhi Khal and his wife,
accept the Zeltluang I offer.”*

The above was an introduction used by every exorcist, because the old folks believed that the Khuangvang spirit traveled

along the path from Lurhpui to Leikhi nupa (husband and wife of Leikhi) on its way to any village. After the introduction, the incantation differed according to the village where the Khal sacrifice was being offered. The exorcist chanted the names of the peaks and hill tops and their demons surrounding the village. Last of all, the hill on which the village was situated was mentioned. The chanting of the incantation continued as follows:

*“Oh bless him and give him a son,
Bless him and give him a daughter;
Bestow on him a good harvest,
Bless him in battle and in hunting;
Let him live ten years – a hundred years,
Bestow on him long life just like the Sun and the Moon.”*

The young pig was then killed under the house, directly beneath the inner bed. The parts of the animal to be offered to the spirits were put in a small cooking pot or a ‘pa-te’ (a small bin or basket for starting tobacco or rice etc). The next day, the parts offered to the spirits were thrown away. On the day of the Vawk te Khal, and also the next day, the whole household was forbidden to speak to any strangers and it was taboo for them to have guests. This restriction was known as ‘hrilh.’

Kel Khal (Goat khal)

The incantation chanted was the same, but the word ‘Mualhawih’ was used instead of ‘Zeltluang.’ And the young goat was killed where the large bamboo tubes of water for the household were kept. The parts offered to the spirits were placed on the roof of the front verandah where the mortar for husking rice was fixed (sum hmum). The Goat’s tail was hung on a string round the neck of the person for whom the sacrifice was performed. It was not to be thrown away. It was placed carefully somewhere; and if it was lost unintentionally, it did not matter. Those who were extremely superstitious would tie it firmly inside the conical cover of the ‘thul’ (basket) at the apex. There it would remain indefinitely.

Ar Khal (Chicken khal)

This sacrifice was offered for newly wedded couples. The sacrifice was performed twice. Once for the groom, and the other for the bride. Under the house, beneath the inner bed (Khumpui), a red rooster was killed, and the down was tied together and hung over the inner bed. The rooster's tail was included among the parts to be offered to the spirits. The offering was placed in a 'pai-per' (a flat basket, generally used by men); and the next morning it was thrown away.

When they used or performed these Khals, the whole family was forbidden to speak to strangers or to entertain guests. To signify that the house and its inmates were taboo to strangers, a leafy branch was hung up in front of the house. It was unlawful for strangers to enter the house and for the inmates to speak to strangers. It was also taboo for that family to go near a blacksmith's forge or bellows (Pum), and they were forbidden to eat any kind of sour fruits. The 'hrilh' or taboo lasted for three consecutive days.

Besides the above, there were other sacrifices performed in their homes, such as: sacrifices to the 'Khaw-hring' (evil eye); 'uihring' (in which a dog was offered); 'Khua-vang hring'; 'ui ha awrh' (in which a dog was killed and its canine teeth were worn suspended round the neck. If the dog sacrificed was a small one, the two canine teeth and the incisors between were worn together).

Sacrifices were also offered for babies and pregnant women, such as the 'chhim,' in which a white hen was offered; the 'ar te pum phel' in which a chicken was killed and partially singed in the fire. It was then cut into two halves longitudinally. One half was wrapped in a leaf and placed outside the upper entrance; the 'ar te hring ban,' in which a chicken was offered. A bamboo with a living chicken fixed by its neck into the split end was stuck into that of the eaves over the front verandah towards the side where the 'ar chhiar' (hen house) was situated. As it was supposed that such a chick's progeny was better than other fowls,

neighbours often rescued it as soon as the ceremony was over and reared it with their own poultry.

There was also the 'ar te lui lam' sacrifice and many and various others too numerous to describe. So let us shift our attention to the third kind of sacrifices, namely, those that were offered and performed on the immediate outskirts of the village.

Dai Lama Inthawina (Sacrifices Offered and Performed Outside the Village)

In our outline history of Mizo, we mentioned the first two Missionaries namely James Herbert Lorrian and F.W. Savidge (known as Pu Buanga and Sap Upa) arrived in Aizawl, and built a house for themselves on Macdonald Hill near 'Bawlmual' or 'Bawlhmun.' 'Bawlhmun' was a special place constructed outside a village. They were used by our ancestors when they offered sacrifices outside their village. In the same way, long, long ago, every Mizo village had a Bawlhmun on the outskirts of the village. We will now describe how they offered a sacrifice at a Bawlhmun and also a sacrifice offered in a jhoom or in a forest quite a distance away from the village.

Dai-bawl (Sacrifice Offered For a Sick Person)

Daibawl was a sacrifice offered most frequently among the Mizo. It was for a person suffering from acute fever and a high temperature. They believed that the suffering and ailment was caused by water and forest demons. So they would use two different sets or kinds of sacrificial paraphernalia. One was to be offered to the 'Tuihuai' (water demon) and the other to the 'Ramhuai' (land demon). To the former they offered a rooster, and to the latter they offered a hen.

All the things necessary for the sacrificial paraphernalia were prepared and made in the patient's house, and the sick person had to touch all these articles. When the preparations were completed, the Daibawl ceremonial rites began in the home of

the sick person, before they set out to the Bawlhmun, the Bawlpu held the Chhembur (combined with instrument and rattle) in one hand and blew on it three times. In the other hand he held the fowl by its legs and swang it like a pendulum. He would then chant the following incantation:

Greetings! (chibai)
Be thou a she-demon,
Be thou a he-demon,
Be thou a great roaring Chief of demons.
So it thinks it can spend its greater wealth?
So it thinks it can spend its lesser wealth?
So it thinks it 'Rawcheh' is of the best?

(‘Raw-cheh’ is a small stick of bamboo used in connection with the Daibawl sacrifice. The top was split for the insertion of a piece of cotton sprinkled with iron filings; the sides were frayed at intervals, and the bottom pointed for sticking in the ground).

The exorcist of Bawlpu continued chanting the incantation, mentioning all the articles to be used in the Daibawl sacrifice. Facing outwards he would sweep the floor with a broom; then they would come out of the house; and carrying the chickens, packets of cooked rice and the sacrificial paraphernalia they would go to the Bawlhmun which was situated outside the village.

When they reached the Bawlhmun, the Bawlpu would place the altar on the ground. He would stick the ‘Theibial’ in the ground and fix the ‘The-lep’ on it. He would then stick the other accessories necessary for the sacrifice in the ground. In a large hole or depression they had dug, he would spread a banana leaf, and pour water into it. He would also drop some pebbles he had brought, which were from the village water hole and other places, into the water that was in the hole. The Bawlpu would hold the chicken by the legs in one hand and blow the ‘Chhembur’ wind instrument. Then with a long-drawn sustained note he would say:

“Oh ho...

Near Zuangpui tree it leaked out?

Near Khuangthli tree it leaked out?

Near Hnahthial plant it leaked out?

(i) ‘Zuang’ is the name of a tree with long leaf-like branches terminating in a cluster of large white flowers which attract bees and birds. Its scientific or botanical name is *Duabanga sonneratioides*. The bark is beaten and boiled with soil impregnated with urine to produce a bluish dye. The timber is used for making rice husking mortars (*buh denna sum*).

(ii) ‘Khuangthli’ is the name of a tree, the fruit of which is edible and grows in bunches, and is chiefly used by the Mizos for baiting bird traps. Its red timber is durable and valuable.

(iii) ‘Hnahthial’ is the name of the plant and its leaves. When it grows in good suitable soil, it produces large leaves used extensively by the Mizo for wrapping up cooked rice for eating on a journey, and for other purposes. There are two principal varieties, the ‘thialnu’ and the ‘thialpa,’ the latter having larger leaves than the former. Its botanical name is *Phrynium capitatum*.

The Bawlpu would continue chanting his incantation. He would mention all the places where water was to be found. He would also add that the paraphernalia to be used in the sacrifice was of the best quality. Let us suppose that the sick person’s name was Vunga. The Bawlpu would then chant the following incantation:

“Come all ye who have captured Vunga,

I redeem his head and his arm!

If you have shackled him, lose him;

If pressed by a rock, dislodge it,

If pressed by a tree, then lift it;

See if you can hold Vunga’s arm,

See if you can hold Vunga’s leg,

You will never succeed.”

After chanting, he would cut the jugular vein of the chicken,

and let the blood drip upon the sacrificial paraphernalia that were on the alter. He would then take the parts to be dedicated to the spirits and place them on the alter. They would cook the rest of the fowl and eat it with the cooked rice they had brought with them.

They would scoop up some water from the improvised hole lined with the banana leaf, and return home taking the water with them. When they arrived at the house of the sick person, they were not allowed to enter the house. Before they entered, the inmates had to bespatter them with water. After that they were allowed to enter. Using the water they had brought from the Bawlhmun, they would rub the arms of the sick person; and that would be the end of the Daibawl sacrificial rites.

Bawlpui

When the various sacrifices were not successful, our ancestors used to offer the Bawlpui sacrifice as a last resort to cure the sick person. Even the Bawlpui would have doubts about the results of the sacrifice. When the Daibawl sacrifice was offered for special cases of fits or convulsions and they were efficacious, the Bawlpui sacrifice was offered in conjunction, to appease the spirits whom they believed were causing the ailment. A pig was offered as a sacrifice.

The Bawlpui and seven men would go to a place in the jungle, where the sick person had not visited, and was not likely to go to, for a long time. There they would construct a rough platform (thang te) above the ground. On that platform they placed two small images on a sitting posture. One would be a 'Chawmnu' and the other 'Chawmpu.' Round the necks of the models they hung conical shells of land snails. They would put the alter made of bamboo strips on the platform and spread a leaf on it. On the leaf they would put some rice flour which they had brought with them. In front of the images of the 'Chawmnu' and 'Chawmpu,' they placed all the sacrificial paraphernalia they had brought with them – seven of each article.

The Bawlpu would then chant an incantation in the form of threats. Then he would kill the pig by cutting its neck and let the blood drop in the sacrificial paraphernalia. They would disembowel the pig and put the raw heart and liver in the mouths of the 'Chawm' images. They would boil and eat the meat of the pig then and there, and placed the parts dedicated to the spirits on the alter and leave them there. Then they would return home. No part of the animal offered was to be taken back to the village.

In those days, the Mizo offered many and various sacrifices such as the Bawlkhath, Lo hman (offered under the jhoom hut); vau tui; sih luh (performed and offered when a sih spring was situated on a jhoom); ram dang sih and other petty, miscellaneous sacrifices.

However, in any case, before they performed a sacrifice for a sick person, it was necessary during those days to find out who or what was causing the ailment, and what kind of sacrifice they had to offer and perform.

The methods they used most of all were: by feeling the pulse of the sick person; by augury and divination; and by reading 'raw rice grains.'

Our ancestors never killed a domestic animal aimlessly, without motive, a reason or a purpose. It was their custom to kill and offer their animals to demons and spirits to appease them. All animals were killed to perform sacrificial rites. That is why it would not be wrong to say that due to their animistic beliefs and these sacrificial rites, their standard of living was extremely low.

25. OBSERVANCE OF HEAD – HUNTING OF ENEMIES RITUALS AND CEREMONIES 225

Our ancestors fought and battled against each other. North against south, east against west; and even villages attacked and raided each other. They ambushed their enemies, and even women were ill-treated and handled rough. It was extremely dangerous and terrifying. Men who were courageous and daring to save the inhabitants of their village from harm were highly esteemed.

Our ancestors were head-hunters who brought home the heads of wild beasts and human beings. Those who brought home the heads of their enemies and performed rituals and ceremonies; and danced to celebrate their victory, gained respect. They were regarded as super-warriors. They gave the people of their village comfort and peace of mind. Among the various Mizo dances to celebrities the taking of human head of scalp was the greatest. No other dance was as glorious. So let us take a look and learnt about their observances of head-hunting of enemies rituals and ceremonies.

When a group of men set out for hunting of enemies or to rid the village of their enemies; or to fight, not openly, but secretly, and to ambush and surprise their foes, they were careful, circumspect and superstitious. They would only set out on a day or time they regarded as auspicious. At night they would look up at the sky for a sign. When the crescent or new moon was accompanied by a star on its right side, they would say, “The moon is brandishing a knife.” But when the star appeared on the left side of the crescent shaped moon, they would exclaim, “The moon is carrying a head!” (suspended

by the hair). They regarded that as a good omen and an expedient time for a hunting expedition.

In the same way, their enemies also regarded it as an expedient time to raid other villages; so all the bachelors and young men were not allowed to follow or take part in the expedition. And the members of the expedition or raiding party would caution and warn their families to be very careful and to be on their guard while they were away.

When the raiding party left the village, if a minivet (bawng) flew before them away from their village, emitting its peculiar cry, they would moving sure of success; and they would be very happy. There is a song, sung to the 'Bawh hla' tune which goes as follows:

“Has the great spirit sent minivet to lead above me?

Yes – it is now auspicious to go hunting
for enemies it behoves me.”

However, when the minivet twitters and flies back towards the village, screeching and crying, they regarded the sign as inauspicious and unlucky, and they would all return home.

Those who killed their enemies were bound to bring the heads home. But if it was a long journey and they were too far away from their village, they scalped their dead adversary and brought home the skin from the top of the head with the hair complete and intact.

Immediately after slaying his foe, the victor had to put his foot upon the corpse, or stand near it and give a shout of victory. He would loudly repeat his name at least three times and sing a 'Bawhhla' (a battle song). The reason for this was that the spirit of the dead foe was to be his servant in the land of the dead. When the victor died, the spirit of the person he had killed would welcome him and it was necessary for him to know his master's voice.

Our ancestors believed that a courageous warrior who killed many foes during his life time had innumerable servants and menials to welcome him; and a large retinue followed him to “Pialral” the Mizo mythical heaven.

The brave and courageous warriors who returned with the heads of their enemies, never entered their village in daylight. It was taboo. They would delay their entrance and sit and wait in a convenient place outside the village. After dinner, when the young men left the Zawlbuk; to serenade their girl friends; to go courting and wooing the young ladies of their choice; the war party who had returned with human heads, would begin to announce their presence by firing their guns and by singing a Bawhhla:

“Oh stars and moon, stand still,
cause not the night to end,
Though the night with darkness blends;
Me, I have brought home my damn opponents head!”

Non-verbally, without being told, all the people in the village knew that the expedition had been a success, and that their men folk had returned, bringing with them human heads, trophies and spoils of war. They were all excited, eager, expectant and filled with anticipation. The young men hurriedly left their girl-friends’ houses and gathered together in the Zawlbuk. There they would practice and compete in and marksmanship the whole night. The men and elders would make a bonfire in the open air and bask by the fire and chat all through the night.

The young maidens would also be very busy making ‘Arkeziak’ to lie on the heads, round the necks, on the upper arms and wrists and round the ankles of the victorious, brave warriors when they met and welcome them at dawn or day break. ‘Arkeziak’ were made with white spun cotton yarn not yet boiled with rice. The yarn was not properly twisted in the spinning when plaited the ‘la tluak’ and made ‘Arkeziaks’ of different lengths, to be tied round the head, the neck and the ankle etc. and there were tassels (peh buk) at both ends.

It was taboo for the people in the village to go out and meet the war-party that was signing 'Bawhhla' songs and firing their guns incessantly outside the village.

The next morning when they were just able to see the ground, the war party would fire their guns with extra verve. The people would know and understand that they were about to enter the village. They would all rush out to meet and welcome them. The young maidens would also hurry out to tie the 'Arkeziak' they had made. They had all been eager to meet each other the whole night long, so when they did meet, the reunion, was so joyful, it would be almost impossible to describe the ecstasy they experienced. No human language would be able to describe it.

The damsels would tie the tasseled 'Arkeziak' they had made during the night, on the heads, arms, legs and necks of the brave, courageous head-hunters of enemies who had returned successful and victorious. The Chief's wife and the wives of the elite, the rich, the wealthy and the aristocrats honoured the warriors with necklaces of amber and semi-precious stones, instead of 'Arkeziaks.'

All the warriors who took part in the expedition but could not kill enemies, nor could they all bring back heads, but had cut, slashed and chopped the fallen dead bodies companions were also regarded as brave head-hunters. All of them were honoured with 'Arkeziaks'; but generally, only those who had slain their foes and brought home the heads were honoured with precious things in addition to 'Arkeziak.'

The warriors used to bring back spoils of war, such as guns, gongs, spears and knives. Their family members who had left them to fend for themselves and their near relatives would relieve them of these spoils. It was forbidden to ask for the trophies or to receive them as a gift. They had to pay a small price for them. According to how they favoured them, they brought the various spoils and paid a gun, a pig, a sheet or cloth, a small wooden or gourd basin or eggs. It depended on the financial condition or circumstances of the buyers.

When the brave warriors had finished singing their songs of prowess and victory and fired their guns to their hearts content, they would disperse and go to their respective homes. The heads they had brought back would be left in the blacksmith's forge. After partaking breakfast they would dress up and wear the complete customs befitting their rank and position in their society. They would retrieve the heads from the forge and each warrior would carry the human head he had won in battle and they would go to the village square situated in front of the Chief's house. A small platform – table or altar – would be constructed, and the heads were placed on it. Near the altar they put a broken piece of pottery in which they put some stale cooked rice. The stage would be set for them to celebrate and dance the ritual dance performed over the taking of an enemy's head.

The warriors were dressed in their best clothes. The left top corner of the cloth went, from behind, under the left armpit; over the right shoulder and round the neck and down over the left shoulder. The right hand top corner went under the right armpit, across the chest and was tied to the other end. In Mizo it was called 'Kawr-tawng-hak.' Over one shoulder hung a large powder horn containing fine, dur gun powder (pai-tung); a tool like a screwdriver; for dismantling the gun (tawng-kaw-la); and pellets (pai-lung). Each of them wore a special plume made of goats hair, dyed red, and fixed in place with a large brass hairpin. This plum was worn only when they danced to celebrate the taking of a human head. It was called a 'Hruk.' They wore all the tasseled 'Arkeziaks' which the young ladies had tied on various parts of their bodies when they had met and welcomed them.

They also wore a head-dress or plume called a 'Tuirual.' It was made of a very flexible bamboo stick. The top end was split in three parts and a small spindlefull of cotton was fixed to each end, making the flexible bamboo stick, the top half white and the bottom half red, to bend and sway. The set of three spindlefulls of cotton used on each 'Tuirual' was known as 'Fang khat.' Those who had or owned 'Zawngchal' cords made a dyed goat's hair, used them as turbans; and those who had already taken

human heads before, and had celebrated their success by killing a mithun, also wore plumes made of a hornbill's feather.

To honour the heroes, young maidens were selected to dance on the village square. The girls wore the red and white 'Tuirual' head-dress that bent and swayed on their hands. They also wore 'Arkeziaks' on their heads, and a dark cloth which was rolled lengthwise, hung over the left shoulder and tied at the level of the waist on the right side. They would dress up to dance and follow the brave heroes. Each of them also carried a second or another red and white 'Tuirual' head-dress that bent and swayed in their hands. There is a stringed instrument song (Ting tang hla) which goes as follows:

*Pan's pipes sound, I tag my hero,
Young maidens, I sway;
He loves me not, but I dance so,
Holding a Tuirual, I just sway.*

Dressed in complete gala costumes and standing there together, before commencing their dance, the brave heroes and the young girls formed a beautiful picture. It is said that they looked like 'Fartuah' and 'Vaube' blooming together. That is, scarlet *enrytrina stricta* and snowy white *Bauhinia variegata* flowers. In the days of our ancestors there was nothing as beautiful and grand as that scene!

The band or music party consisting of the darbu with its three gongs of different sizes; i.e. the drum; the large gong and the pandean pipes (tumphet) would be prepared and ready to start.

When all was ready, the brave warriors would walk slowly round the small scaffold or platform on which the heads were placed. The leader would have a boiled egg in his bag, he would consume half the hard boiled egg, and squeeze and press the remaining half into small bits with his left hand, and sprinkle the pieces on the stale rice which they had already placed in the broken piece of pottery near the platform. While doing so, he would chant a spell as follows:

*“Here, I curse you with nurture from my left hand!
Below the parth you’ll stand,
Above the parth I’ll stand;
May the gun you carry be wet!
May the pellets of my gun find you heart and there rest!”*

This was called ‘casting an evil spell.’ He would then sing a ‘Bawhhla’ song and fire his gun three times. The Darbu and the tumphit (pan’s pipe) would play a tune, the words of the tune was: ‘Our venture you impede; our venture for heads you empade’ Enthusiastically and whole heartedly the brave warriors would chant. “We fought steadfast enemies; we took their heads as trophies!” Then the darbu would play the following song:

*“Are our foes seeking trophies,
seeking trophies,
seeking trophies?
Are our great foes seeking trophies,
Seeking trophies,
Seeking trophies?”*

The Pandean pipes would also take up the strain with a tremble and a tremolo to the excited notes of the darbu and the pandean pipes, and keeping in time with the music and the drum, the warriors would swing their right heels and swing them back to the right. At the same time, they would skip, hop or slide the left foot forward and move forward keeping time with the measure of the music and the beat of the drum. The young ladies followed, swaying and swinging the ‘Tuirual’ they held from side to side. In this way, they performed their grand march!

The sound of the music rose in a crescendo, and the measure of the music and the beating of the drum quickened and accelerated, till the dancing and the music reached and caused a terrific, deafening din! The whole population of the village would be present: watching the grand march, fascinated, with their mouths open, and their eyes bulging and almost falling out of their sockets! This would go on the whole day.

On the platform, in the centre of the grand march, there were the heads of their enemies. The warriors would deride, exult and gloat over, and scoff and taunt the unfortunate heads. They would fire their guns loaded with gunpowder only, over and over again, into the gaping mouths of their trophies. The swollen tongues, covered with gunpowders, filled the gaping mouths!

A pot of sweet zu (liguor) would be placed in the middle or centre of the village square, and warriors who had celebrated the taking of human heads in the post, by killing and offering a mithun, would suck the zu first. After that all the warriors would follow suit one by one. A veteran who had already celebrated his victory before with a hayal would chant the following:

*“On my head,
Hornbill feather,
Revolves so, in my hair!”*

He would deride, gloat over, scoff and taunt the enemies heads, and fire his gun at them. In the meantime, quite a distance away from the platform, the brave warriors danced in a zigzag course. The young ladies followed them, swaying and singing their ‘Tuiruals.’

Since it was a gala occasion, performed in front of the Chief’s house on the village square, they were permitted to play all the Darbu songs and tunes which were reserved for special occasions. Among those tunes the most prominent ones were:

*“The owl and the swift at loggerheads,
They have bald heads, both bald heads!”*

*“A fowl drinking water from the gourd,
Elephant herd, stamping the ground.*

These and many others were neither forbidden nor prohibited on that occasion.

After that, a wooden post, set aside for a religious purpose – a taboo post (thing serh) was erected in the centre of the village square. Besides the post a vessel made of a large gourd was placed, and the sweetest zu was syphoned into it till it was full to

the brim. They also put a large chopper used for wood cutting, near the post. Any one who was brave enough and daring enough among the men folk, would made a bee line towards the post, pick up the big knife and chop the post. A person sitting near the post would scoop up zu from the vessel and serve the brave man zu in a big cup. After drinking the cup of zu, he would go straight back to his former place.

Cutting and chopping the taboo post denoted a pledge. It signified a vow. The man who chopped the post and drank the big cup of zu was actually saying, "I give and offer my life to defend my Chief and his subjects!" When there were many such men in a village it brought comfort and peace of mind to the people.

In the evening, they would take the heads and fix them on the ends of freshly cut poles about the size of an ordinary man's fore arm. This was done on the western side of the village. The poles with the heads fixed on them would be set up or erected in a row at the 'lungdawh' which is a platform made of large stone slabs and memorial stones erected in memory of the dead. Later on the heads were suspended on a tree at the entrance to the village; and the crows would feast on the flesh! A Chief named Mawngpawrha composed a song deriding and scoffing a chief of the Zadeng clan as follows:

*"Let no drongo plumes be seen on Zadeng heads,
Only crows instead!"*

The tree on which the heads of enemies were eventually suspended was known as 'Sah-lam.' For this purpose they preferred and used the 'zih-nghal' or 'Phan' tree. The former bears fragrant white blossoms with reddish purple markings (*stereospermum chelonoides*) and the latter is a durable tree which is a species of elm (*ulmus lancifolia*).

The day after the gala occasion and dancing on the village square, wearing the 'Chhawndaw!' plume was forbidden. On the other hand, they were allowed to wear the 'Lenchhawn' plume.

When they went courting, they would wear a 'Lenchhawn' plume and people would regard it as wonderful, and nobody would dare to offend them. When they encountered any wicked, quarrelsome high-spirited persons, they would say, "Move aside! My waving Chhawn plume will trounce you!" and they would be silenced and would stop fidgeting.

At the earliest convenience the successful head hunter of enemies would sacrifice a mithun or a pig and perform a ceremony over the foe he had killed in fighting. If he did not do so, they believed that the spirit of his dead foe would become precious and even dare to challenge him. And the head-hunter of enemies would become insane. Besides that, he would not be able to use the spirit of his dead foe as a slave or servant in the land of the dead.

The man who offered a mithun would erect a 'Hranghrual' in front of his house. A tall 'Phul-raw' bamboo (a species of large clump bamboo from which Mizo made large bamboo tubes for carrying and storing water for household use) was erected, and a 'Hranghrual' was fixed at the top. The 'Hranghrual' was a contrivance made of small pieces of hollow bamboos, suspended by strings in a bunch. They produced a rattling sound as they struck against one another in the breeze. The people regarded that as stupendous and wonderful. At the foot of the 'Hranghrual' they also erected fresh leafy branches of the 'Thing-sia' tree and tied them together with 'Vawm-hrui.' The 'thingsia' is a species of the chestnut tree (*castanopsis tribulodies*) and the 'vawmhrui' is a climbing plant. Near this they would fix a long plant on two posts, like a plaque, and carve a row of many 'Kawk-vahai' birds. The 'Kawkva-hai's is species of hornbill. Other birds of the same species are the 'Vapual' and the 'Va-awk.'

The man who sacrificed a pig was allowed to do the things mentioned above, except creating a 'Hanghrual.' Those who took part in the way-party, expedition or venture and did not bring home any heads were exempted from performing the 'mi lu ai'

ceremony. For them it was optional. But with hopes of becoming their slaves and menials after death, they would make the boys from the age of five to eleven and even younger ones, who were still babies out and chop with a knife, the heads brought back by the head-hunters of enemies.

On the day the sacrifice was performed, two or three persons, each carrying a gun and a shield, would put on an act depicting head-hunters stalking their enemies. They would fire their guns and sing ‘Bawhhla’ songs. To those who watched this drama, it was interesting, exciting and thrilling. On the same day, they did not sing other songs. They sang mostly ‘Bawhhla’ songs, and kept on firing their guns incessantly.

Of all the ‘Aih’ ceremonies performed by our ancestors in the olden day life of the Mizo, the ceremony performed over the taking of a human head was the greatest and grandest. The person who killed a mithun and performed a ceremony was highly esteemed. He was respected by the community, for giving them comfort and peace of mind. Wherever he went he was given priority, and was favoured and treated like a V.I.P. when drinking occasions were held, he was the first to hold and drink zu from the ‘No pui.’ It is depicted clearly in a song composed by famous Mizo poetess Saikuti:

*“Capture our foes and I’ll give you a plume,
where’r you stroll, they’ll dance to your tune.”*

*“Its you, who saved our great village from harm delivers,
Drink beer young men, who wield swords across the Tiau
river.”*

It could be said that they themselves were puffed up and fully aware of their position and regarded themselves as far above the common mediocre folks in their society. When they spoke threateningly and menacingly, they often used the following words: “Ka lu chhawntual, ka ban ralsamkuai,” which meant, I plant leafy branches in front of my house, and carve rows of hornbills on a plant; in the same way, I often wear plumes on my head,

and just as the ‘ralsamkuai’ creeper entwines round the stalks of all the plants in its vicinity, my fingers entwine the hairs of my foes when I bring their heads home!” Literally, the expression they used meant, “My head is the village street where the ‘Chawn’ plumes walk, and my arm is the enemy-hair-catcher.” (‘Ralsamkuai’ is the name of a creeper with curled up hook-shaped thorns, square stem and flowers in spherical clusters. Literally: Enemy-hair-catcher – unicaria home-malla).

In this way, the greatest ritual, ceremony and celebration over the taking of human heads, and the greatest dancing occasion was performed. If we compare it with the present modern Mizo way of life, it might appear horrible and cruel. But if we ponder on their way of life during their time and period; and if we realize that they were always fighting, village against village; and if we really understood that they needed many brave warriors to defend their village against attacking foes, then we would see that their village against attacking foes, then we would see that their rough ways was a dire necessity; and since necessity is the mother of invention, they invented their way of life skillfully, splendidly, magnificently and beautifully.

And besides, their mythological religion stipulate that they must kill and take the heads of wild beasts and enemies, and control their spirits, so that they would be able to own them after death. In short, we can say that their way of life was commendable and praiseworthy.

26. LAST RITES

Be the dawn of Christianity in Mizoram in the year 1894, the Mizo had their own ideas and views about death. They had their own customs of preparing the body for burial, and they also had their own beliefs about the journey of the soul after death. Now, over a century after they had become Christians, their views, customs and beliefs have changed considerably. According to the tales of the old folks, their simple ideas, their firm customs and their beliefs which took the form of mythology are so interesting, it awakens in us a great desire to know about them.

Death in Different Forms

The various kinds of death was summed up by our ancestors into four main classes.

(a) Awmlaia thi (Natural Death)

‘Awmlai’ is the name of the personification of death who is the author of death and sickness. ‘Awmlaia thi’ means a natural death. If a person died due to some ordinary, simple, easy to understand disease; or due to ill-death, bad conditions and a weak constitution; or of old age for which there is no comment; or if he died due to some kind of epidemic; or if he died in his own bed surrounded by, comforted and embraced by his kith and kin, this was called ‘Awmlaia thi’ (natural death). Of all the different kinds of death, the olden days Mizos chose and desired this most of all. We will describe their burial customs later in this chapter.

(b) Hlamzuih (Death of an Infant or Baby)

When an infant died at or soon after birth, it was known as ‘Hlamzuih’. Customs are not the same from village to village. In some villages, when a three month old baby died, its death was

regarded as 'Hlamzuih.' Sometimes when a child died and its age was well past and over three months, if the parents could not afford to sacrifice an animal at the burial, the death and burial was also known as 'Hlamzuih.'

Their next door neighbour would assist them with the burial and they would dig a hole under the house with a spade. The corpse was wrapped in a swaddling sheet or cloth; and to assuage its thirst, they would dampen a piece of cotton wool with its mother's milk and shove it into the baby's mouth, to suck on its way to the spirit world. In the same way, they put some grains of raw rice in the closed palm of one hand, for the baby's snack or to offset hunger. In the other hand, the 'Hlamzuih' baby held a fowl's egg; because our ancestors believed that the egg would roll before it lead it to the spirit world and to the village of the dead. They put the corpse in a big earthen pot and buried it.

The Mizo of long ago contended 'Hlamzuih' and regarded it as not worth considering. Some of the old folks said that it was, "Like plucking a pumpkin flower," If it died at night, they buried it at once. They did not regard it as a misfortune.

Generally when a person died, a wake was held in the house of the bereaved, and they would give condolence and contribute refreshments for the wake. But they never held a wake for the 'Hlamzuih.' The young men and the young ladies did not participate in the burial or funeral. They took no part whatever in the death of a 'Hlamzuih.' Only the mother of the baby would sob and weep bitterly. When smoke gets in their eyes badly enough to make tears flow, the Mizo use this expression and exclaim, "Weeping for a 'Hlamzuih' is as nothing compared to this!"

(c) Rai-cheh

If a woman died during child birth and labour pains – even after the child was born – her death was known as 'Rai-cheh.' It was regarded as the most horrible death. Every woman dreaded this sort of death. That was why the day after the child was

born, the mother was sent by her family to fetch water from the village water hole, streams or spring for their household use. Carrying a few bamboo tubes of water, she would return home plodding slowly with great difficulty. Unfortunately, if she died after fetching water for household use, her death was not counted or regarded as a 'Raicheh.' They would say it was a natural death (Awmlaia thi).

On the day of a 'Raicheh' death, nobody would fetch or carry firewood from the jungle. No one would weave cloth; and during the night, nobody would spin or wind cotton. The loom of the demised was regarded as taboo. No one dared to use her clothes. More so the leather strap which passes round the waist of a weaver, on which she leaned back to keep the wrap taut (Kawng vawn). The women would never sit in the same place where the 'Raicheh' sat when weaving. They feared and believed that they would die the same kind of death.

They believed that on the day the 'Raicheh' died, her spirit would roam about in the village. Every house fix a leafy branch or a broken fern outside the door post to signify that, "It is taboo to enter" their house. By doing this, they sincerely believed that the spirit would not enter their house.

(d) Sar-thi

If a person dies an unnatural death without any ailment; if he was mauled and killed by a wild beast; if he fell from a tree and died; if a tree fell on him, or rolling rocks killed him; or if he died in a fire, his death is known to the Mizo as 'Sarhi.' They regarded this kind of death as the most unfortunate, the most calamitous, the most terrible and horrible way of dying.

The old folks believed that though it was not the season for storm or strong winds to be blowing, if a person died an unnatural death, a strong wind or gale was sure to blow. This kind of wind was called a 'Sar thli' (Sar wind). When a part of a rainbow or a short rainbow appears in the sky during clear or good weather, they would exclaim, 'Sar a zam!' (a sar has formed or appeared),

and they believed that somehow or somewhere someone and met an unnatural death.

When a person died an unnatural death and was carried home, the corpse was never taken in through the front door. It was taken round to the back of the house and through the back door. The corpse was not allowed to spend the night in the house, so no matter what time of the day it was, they dug a grave hurriedly and the corpse was again carried out through the back door and buried immediately. If they did not do this, they believed in the saying that, “Another unnatural death was sure to follow” (Zulin a zui duh).

Burial Customs

When a person died a natural death, those who were sober or had their wits about them, would close his eyes. They would arrange the corpse so that it would lie down in an orderly way. To keep the lower jaw and chin from falling down they would plait some yarn and use it to hold up the chin and tie the ends in a knot on top of his head. They would dress the corpse in his own clothes. If it was a female, they tucked the corner of her kilt at her waist, particularly on her left side.

When it was time to lay the body in the grave, or to place it in a sitting posture – a kind of lying-in-state practised by the Mizo of long ago, and accorded to all except infants (Hamzuih) and those who died an unnatural death (Sarathi), they would wash the dead person’s hands and feet and also the face. They would oil the hair, usually with pigs fat; then they would knot the hair especially and notable on the left side of the head.

When a young man or young lady who had not been married died a natural death, it affected the whole community. They would hold a wake for at least one night. The young men would never joke when they dug the grave. Seriously, soberly, silently and sadly, they would work till they finished digging the grave.

When they disposed of the dead, many young men and maidens, wearing black cloths would follow the coffin all the way to the grave. On the night they held a wake, no one joked. If anyone did joke the leaders of bachelors would scold them. They regarded it as a grave and serious matter. They also dug the grave very deep, and laid large, hard flat stones all round the grave. The grave was dug horizontally contrary to the other graves in the ceremony. This is known as ‘Thlan kham pheì.’

When a great, prominent, and highly favoured person in the village died, after digging the grave to a depth of man’s chest, on the up hill side of the grave they would excavate a cave long and wide enough for the cadaver. The walls of the grave would be lined with slabs of stone. The floor, which was dug at a steep incline was also lined with stone slabs. They placed the corpse in the cavity at the top of the incline, so that when it decayed, the skull would roll to the bottom of the incline. Last of all, they would cover and close the grave with a huge slab of stone. This kind of grave was known as ‘Tian-hrang thlan.’

Generally, when the father of the family died, they would ‘zalh’ him. In some cases they would even ‘zalh’ women and children. ‘Zalh’ was a sort of lying in-state. In normal circumstances they propped the tubes of water kept for household use. They arranged it so that it would rest its lower arms on something and tied its head to the wall, so that it would not bend down.

When a ‘Thangchhuah’ man died he was dressed with ‘Thangchhuah’ cloth which was a mark of distinction coveted by Mizo. It was worn only by a man who had killed a certain number of different animals in the chase or had given a number of public feasts. The cloth was a stripped cloth, and to match it there was also a striped turban. The corpse would also wear earrings with a single bead on each earring. They also decorated him with a lovely head dress made of the long tail feathers of the Vakul (Chimraj or dronga) bird.

When a ‘pasaltha’ died, and they prepared the corpse for

burial, they did it so that people would know that the diseased was surely a 'Pasaltha.' They put all his important possessions on him. They put his gun in his hands and hung his gun powder horn on his shoulder.

The corpse lying in state, friends and relations would come and drink zu with him. They would pour the dead man's share of zu near the corpse, and they would also offer zu to others whom they favoured. When it was time for the funeral or burial, they moved the corpse and put in on the bed and prepared it for burial in the usual customary law.

When the head of a family died, without fail they had to sacrifice an animal. This was called 'Thlaichhiah.' They believed that the slain animal would accompany the dead person to the other world. Well to do families sacrificed an animal even when the person who die was not the head of the family. Generally, the animal slain or offered was a four-footed animal. Those who were rich would offer a mithun, and those who were poor would kill a pig or a goat for the 'Thlaichhiah.'

The 'Thlaichhiah' meat was used especially to prepare a feast for the young men who dug the grave and for those who came to console, and condole the bereaved family. However, the young men who dug the grave practiced 'Tlawmngaihna' so they would never eat the meat nor join in the feast. And even when their nephews and nieces held their arms and pulled them they positively and absolutely declined. Only the old men and old women and half-witted young men would partake of the feast. The 'Thlaichhiah' sacrifice and feast was offered and prepared on the day the person died and before he was buried.

If a person did not offer the 'Thlaichhiah' sacrifice, when he quarreled unexpectedly with his neighbours, they would scoff and jeer at him and taunt and ridicule him by saying, "Didn't you let your father die without the 'Thlaichhiah' sacrifice? They regarded this as the most hurtful expression, they could think of. Besides, they believed that the dead person would take all the meat of the animal killed for 'Thlaichhiah' with him to the other world. So

they were also doing him a good favour.

When it was to bury the corpse, they would wrap it in a white cloth. On top of that, they would wrap it again in a black cloth, and make it firm with pointed bamboo sticks at the chest and abdomen. At the head and the feet they would tie the ends of the cloth together with the threads of the wrap of the cloth which remain unwoven where two lengths join and which have been cut off after the cloth is finished (*la chum*), to close the ends firmly.

The olden days Mizo burial or funeral had nothing whatsoever to do with religion. The mourners consisted of his dead man's family, his children, grand children, his nephews and nieces and his son-in-law. If the bereaved family was well to do and owned guns, they would shoot empty barrels in the air and beat a large gong or other gongs just before the corpse was carried out of the house to be buried. The grandeur of a funeral depended on and was measured by the number of weepers. Generally the time set for the burial was in the evening, so that they would be able to fill in the grave before darkness or nightfall.

Our ancestors did not know how to bear the death of their loved ones. They would deliberately and willfully refuse to eat any food. Two or three days after the funeral, they would eat just a little bit to sustain themselves and to survive. Due to this, they became drawn, haggard, and thin. Nine weeks or about three months after the burial, they would perform the 'Inthian' sacrifices and ceremony to purify, themselves and their family clean. They regarded it as the end of the stay of the spirit of the dead person in its old home; and the beginning of it to the land or village of the dead (*Mitthi khua*). The ceremony consisted of throwing away the basket of offerings which had been made to the spirit during its stay in the home. This was sometimes accompanied by the killing of a fowl and always by a beer-drink.

After the purification ceremony, they stopped being a house or family of mourning. They washed and cleaned themselves;

oiled and comb their unkempt disheveled hair; they also washed the clothes they had worn during the period of mourning, and dried, folded and put them away. They endeavoured to be as happy as they could, and they associated and had fellowship with their neighbours.

Kuang Ur

The custom of 'Kuang ur' was practiced by our ancestors. It was the disposal of a dead body by placing it in a sealed coffin made out of a long hollowed out log, and keeping it in the house close to a constantly burning fire, till the flesh was all decayed and only the bones remained. It was still a common practice among the ruling Chiefs and their classes in the earlier days of the British rule in Mizoram.

Because it was difficult and troublesome, only the Chiefs and the wealthy disposed of the dead in this manner. They procured a trunk of a tree large enough to hold the body of a man when they had hollowed it out. They split it into halves and dug out the insides of both halves. At the bottom of one they made a round hole that had a diameter of two inches. In this half they placed the dead body. The other half was used as a lid, and both joined together formed a sealed coffin made thoroughly airtight by applying, plastering and filling every aperture with damp ash, so that no foul smell could escape.

On the floor where the outer bed was usually situated, they would make a large fireplace or hearth. They would stand the sealed coffin upright near this improved hearth and fix the end of a long pipe in the only hole in the coffin. The other end of the pipe was buried in the ground under the house. They let all the bad odour escape through the pipe.

Every evening, the young men who practiced 'Tlawmngaihna' would bring home logs of dry wood. They made a fire on the big hearth and smoked the coffin; kin sling and attending the fire, they kept up the whole night. During the day, the male adults,

would relieve them and kept the fire burning the whole day. Without a break, day and night, continuously the sealed coffin was heated and smoked. In some cases this went on for one whole month, till the flesh of the corpse was all decayed and only the bones remained.

The more altruistic among them would open the sealed coffin as if it was their greatest desire to do so. Without being fastidious and without the slightest sign of disgust, they would wash and clean everything that was necessary. They would wash and clean the skull and bones and put them out in the sun to dry. The dead man's family would wrap the dry bones in a cloth and put it in a 'Mitthi thul' (A basket with a close fitting conical lid, kept in the house especially for keeping the bones of a corpse). They prized, treasured and valued the bones more than any other valuable possessions they had inherited, and they treated it with love and care.

Unfortunately and unexpectedly, if a fire broke out, and their house caught fire, during the conflagration the first thing they saved and carried out of the burning house was the 'Mitthi thul' which contained the dry bones. They treasured and kept the bones as a keep sake for a long long time. When they moved to a new village, they took the bones with them. They would take them out of the basket often, and wipe and clean and oil them with the utmost care; and after many years they would dig a grave and bury them with great reverence and veneration.

Journey of Soul After Death

Our Mizo ancestors believed that when a person died, his or her soul or spirit would cleave open the top of the head and depart from its body. It would climb to the top of the bed post (tungchaw); from there it would climb onto a beam (khanchhuk); from the beam it found its way to the wall plate (liang); and from there it went out of the house through the back door. It would take a trip to Rih lake and come back again. Then it would roam around near its home and wander around on the outskirts of the village.

The old folks believed that it often entered the house, so they would make ‘mitthi chhiah’ offerings. His place, plate and spoon were reserved for him at mealtimes and he was invited to sit down and eat. Small offerings of food were placed for him.

After a period of three months, they would perform the ‘thitin’ ceremony. The dead person’s spirit would set off on its second trip to Rih lake, never to return again. There is a legend or story which explains why our ancestors believed that all the spirits of the departed go to Rih lake which is now situated in Burma, not far from and to the east of Champhai.

Long, long ago, a group of men hunting big game, spent the night in the forest near Rih lake. Incidentally, one of the men could not sleep and lay awake during the night. Suddenly, he heard the sound of someone talking. He listened carefully and clearly and distinctly, he heard the voice of his wife saying regretfully, “when I departed from my children, I did not tell them that I had hidden some dried meat in the new earthen pot not used yet for cooking (bel lam); and that I had put some eggs in the bran in a bin behind the inner wall – and their father is away hunting big game.” He listened to the chatter of the spirits of the departed as they approached Rih lake. When he went home, he found that his wife had actually died; and he also found the dried meat and the eggs exactly where she said she had hidden them.

From that time onwards, most of our old folks believed that the spirits of the departed went to Rih lake on their way to the land of the dead. That is why, since long long ago, and even after they had been converted to Christianity, when they composed songs or hymns in memory of the dead, they mentioned Rih lake. They still use poetical expression such as, ‘Dead and gone via Rih’ (Rih sang mual liam) and “Crossing Rih” or “Rih crossing” (Rih sang kai).

In Mizo mythology, some of the things found near and around Rih lake were said to be connected with the dead. For instance,

the reflection of a row of trees in the water called 'Mitthi pal' (hedge or palisade of the dead); and a fabulous bird known as 'Rih ar' (Rih chicken) was known to our forebears as 'Mitthi ar' (dead man's chicken).

From Rih lake the spirits of the departed continued on their journey till they reached 'Thlanpial.' (Some folks say it is a rock cave situated near the present village called Khawlek). The indelible scratches seen on the face of the rock were said to have been made by the spirits of dead women as they passed by. They made the scratches with the metal implement (thir khai) hanging on a string from their 'tuibur' (woman's pipe).

From 'Thlanpial' they continued their journey till they reached 'Hring lang tlang' (which is a mythical mountain). From its peak they looked back and viewed with longing, the world of the living or the world of man which they had left behind. They would become pensive; and their hearts would be filled with longing and they would weep bitterly.

On 'Hring lang' mountain there was a spring. The water in the pool was cool, clear, limpid and pure. This spring was called 'Lungloh Tui' (water of forgetfulness – corresponding to 'Lethe' in Greek mythology). This spirits of the departed, feeling tired, weary, dreary and thirsty, would drink the 'Lungloh tui' and lose all their longings to return to earth.

Not far from 'Lungloh Tui', on the road to 'Mitthi Khua' (dead man's village), beautiful flower called 'Hawilo Par' (no turning back flower) grew profusely. When the departed spirits plucked these mythical flowers and wore them in their hair or ears, they lost all desire to look back upon the earth which they had left behind.

They continued their journey till they reach 'Zing-van-zawl,' which was situated near the exit and entrance to 'mitthi khua' (land of the dead) and 'Pialral' (Mizo Paradise). It was also the front yard of the Mizo mythical giant 'Pawla.' It is said that Pu Pawla (Mr Pawla) had a big, long pellet-bow; and he shot any

and every spirit of the departed who passed in front of his house on their way to 'Mitthi Khua.' He would pull the bow string with all his might, and the pellets he used were as large as a hen's egg. He never missed and the injury caused by the pellet would become a sore and swell up into a cyst which took not less than three years to heal!

However, Pu Pawla did not shoot the spirit of babies who were less than three months old (Hlamzuih). It was compulsory for him to shoot all young men and maidens who had not taken part in 'Chawngchen' ceremonies. He accused them of neglecting and disregarding their religious duties. The 'Hlamzuih' spirit would agree with him regarding this most debatable point, saying that they would surely have taken part in religious ceremonies if they had lived long enough to do so.

The 'Thangchhuah pa' was also allowed to pass by without being shot with a pellet-bow. In fact, the old folks believed that Pu Pawla would be thrilled and would watch with awe, wonder, pride and joy as the 'Thangchhuah pa' and the animals he had killed in the chase; the animals he had killed to prepare feasts for the public and the animals he had killed for funerals passed by in a grand procession.

From 'zingvanzawl,' the spirits would enter 'Mitthi khua.' Our ancestors believed that the spirits of the departed spent their time and kept things going in the same way as they had done when they were alive. They would make jhooms and do all the work that it entailed. Those who were wealthy and prosperous during their life time were still rich and well to do in 'Mitthi khua.' In the same way those who were impoverished and indigent on earth were still included and numbered among the ranks of the poor and needy in 'Mitthi khua,' the land of the dead.

However, all the things in 'Mitthi khua' are fake. This can be seen and understood clearly from our Mizo zoological and botanical terms such as: Mithi savawm (Dead man's bear, which is really a caterpillar); Mitthi zawngtah (large inedible bean-like pods); Mitthi vaimim (Dead man's maize – which is in fact a

species or arum); and Mitthi buhtun (Dead man's millets). Those who were common people lived in 'Mitthi khua' which was situated on this side of the river Pial. Across the river Pial the land was known as 'Pialral,' the Mizo Paradise or heaven.

Then the 'Thangchhuah' families who had been successful in hunting and the families who had given a number of public feasts or pierced mithuns etc. and earned the title of 'Thangchhuah' which was coveted by the Mizo, crossed the Pial river and were privileged to live in that 'Never, Never Land' known as Pialral. There they enjoyed pleasures to the hilt. They neither toiled nor worked, and literally ate of the cornucopia of plenty. This was the land that all our Mizo forfathers craved and desired to dwell in.

PART II

FOLKTALES

INTRODUCTION

It is not certain when the Mizo started telling stories. But one thing is certain that our ancestors no doubt told and composed stories in the year 1350 A.D. when they inhabited areas around the Run River. However, we must keep this in mind that our ancestors did not maintain any written documents so, it is certain that many of their stories have been lost. The stories which survived the test of time mainly because of their historical, educational, sociological and moral values.

It is quite a difficult task to arrange the stories in the chronological order but since our aim is to study the development of Mizo Oral Literature, let me divide the stories believed to have been compare and told before our ancestors crossed the Tiau river or in another word arrived in the present Mizoram and the second stage comprising of stories told after the cross-over. I have made this classification from the names of rivers, mountains, environment and style and mode of telling stories. The following are considered to be stores which originated when the Mizo lived beyond the Tiau rivers.

- (1) The stag and the tortoise
- (2) The fight between animals and birds
- (3) The miserable boy
- (4) The tortoise and the monkey
- (5) Two sisters went in search of cucumber
- (6) A father who abandoned his two sons
- (7) The monkey's flute and the bustard quail
- (8) The father and the seven sons
- (9) The egg and the stick
- (10) With a long mouth

- (11) The bear's pond
- (12) Sichangneii
- (13) Chawngchilhi
- (14) The swing and the monkey
- (15) Samdala
- (16) Kelchawngi
- (17) A stone that told lies
- (18) Vanchungnula
- (19) A horn that was curved like a spiral
- (20) White eyelid monkey had a stubble for its tail
- (21) Why the dog did not have horns while the goat had
- (22) The tiger and the frog
- (23) Pi Hmuaki is remembered for her song
- (24) Vaichuka and the strong man
- (25) Duhmanga leh Dardini
- (26) Chhura

After crossing the Tiau river the following Folktales have been considered to evolved:

- (1) Chhura
- (2) Thailungi
- (3) He who sharpened the dao (Chemtatrawta)
- (4) Tualvungi leh Zawlpala
- (5) Mualzavata
- (6) Aihniara
- (7) Buizova
- (8) Rimenhawihhi
- (9) Tlingi leh Ngama
- (10) The chief's daughter and a snake

- (11) Kawrdumbela
- (12) Rahtea
- (13) Sibuta leh Dari
- (14) Lalruanga, a magician
- (15) Hlawndawhthanga
- (16) Liandova (a very poor man who married the chief daughter)
- (17) Sawngkhara used to get a beautiful wife
- (18) Kungawrhi and the goblins
- (19) Ringinu and Thialtea
- (20) Chala and Thangi
- (21) Sazaltepa and Bakvawmtepu
- (22) Ngaitei saved her native village
- (23) Ugly Che-pa-ha-khata became the spokesman of the Mizos
- (24) Gifts from the brother-in-law.

The 'Chhura' stories believed to have been originated in the early stages however continued to develop in the later stages. Let me repeat what I had said earlier that these stories are not arranged in chronological orders.

It is upto us to decide whether to believe or not, the notion and text of these stories but let us however, point out some interesting elements and objects found in them. Let me further elaborate my point and call some of these stories as the beginning of naming of animals, birds, insects etc. They interpreted their opinions and views according to their ways and style.

In many of these folktales we find a number of symbolical and allegorical interpretations which are quite relevant to modern day situations. As a whole we can say that our ancestors cited stories which teaches as about the moral laws, civic sense, evils of war, sacrifice for the cause of others, importance and greatness

of love and many other civil and moral values and ethics.

We also notice that our forefathers believed in life after death from the story of 'Tlingi leh Ngama' in which we get a picture of place where the dead will go. The story of 'Darthiangi and Chertuala' is very touching as it tells us about life which has no bounds.

Thus, out of the 26 Folktales 13 of them have some educative values, which are important for the development of human beings and the society in which we live in.

Stories which comprises the second stage on the other hand are considered to be quite different from the earlier ones. This may be due to their change of environment, habitat and development and progress of the mind. The folktales they developed involved both tragedy and comedy which eventually became guidelines for modern day novelist. One very significant and striking feature that has been found after an elaborate study of 42 Folktales is that we have exactly equal number tragedy and comedy in the Mizos language.

I hope I may not be wrong in saying that our ancestors had foreseen the modern techniques of war because they had mentioned in some of the stories the name of tools, objects and articles which did not appear relevant in their age. This particularly refers to the modern day star-war programme which our ancestors had talked about in the Folktales about the wars between evil versus spirits.

Secondly, it was imagined that human beings after their death were transformed to stars, birds, butterfly etc. and the stars were named accordingly.

Thirdly, our early story-tellers started including the supernatural elements in their folktales and even making these elements the central theme of their art.

Fourthly, we also notice that the word 'Vai' referring to a

non-Mizo started being included in the stories. From our study of such stories we come to the conclusion that the Mizo considered the 'Vai' to be physically powerful, stronger and superior to them but they are said to be mentally inferior to a Mizo. This is evident in the story of 'Che-pa-ha-khata.'

Fifthly, it has also been found that our forefathers talked a lot about the boundless nature and extent of love and affections which they so skillfully put them into words, based their stories on the different elements of love in such a way that these love-stories have a deep effect on the reader's mind.

However, there are some folktales which cannot be considered as belonging to the category of Mizo Myth or Legend or Folktales or stories. We are thankful to all these who have published books on Mizo Folktales. But in the book *Mizo leh Vai Thawnthu* by Major Shakespeare, 1898, stories such as "Zaia khualzin thu" and "Zaia mihring sa ei khuaa a zin thu" and "Khenah leh Rama" cannot be considered as Mizo folktales because the context of these stories do not relate to the Mizo society alone. We can also easily identify from the title of the book that it contains both Mizo and Non-Mizo Folktales.

Again around the year 1950, Pu P.S. Dahrawka, another pioneer in this field of Oral Literature, collected many Mizo Folktales and published in 1964, *Mizo Thawnthu*, where again we cannot accept the story of "Chemtei" and "Hluanchhinga" as a Mizo Folktales mainly because they were found to be composed more in line of a short-story.

I have had great interest from an early age in the field of Mizo Folktales and I could even read them with interest and by the time I was a student of Class IX I could translate some of Mizo Folktales in Burmese language. With the help and encouragement that I received from different corners and especially from the Ludu Press, Mandalay, Myanmar I was able to publish my first book *Mizo Folktales* in 1966.

In 1990-91 when the school syllabus in Mizoram was

reviewed, I was asked to collect as many Folktales as possible and the collection that I made were published as the “Rapid Reader” in Mizo. This book *Mizo Thawnthu* (Mizo Folktales) was divided into three sections according to age group of students.

1. THE STAG AND THE TORTOISE

One day a stag and a tortoise saw a python that was gliding their way. The stag suggested jumping over the big snake. Obviously the tortoise could not jump, though the stag encouraged it to try. The stag jumped first and got clearly over the snake. When the tortoise jumped, it fell right on top of the snake's eggs. The stag ran without trying to help the tortoise which had no other means to escape the anger of the snake except by rolling itself down a steep slope of the hill. So it rolled down the slope and fell right into the nest of a bear. The tortoise explained that it was in such a hurry to escape the big snake that it did not really see where it was going. At the same time it requested the bear to help it. The bear replied that it had no power against the big snake. In fact was also afraid of it. It urged the tortoise to run on. It met a tiger and asked for help. The tiger was afraid of the big snake too. The tortoise ran on and met an eagle. When it was asked to help, it agreed and hid the tortoise under its left wing. Soon the big snake appeared. It asked the bird where the tortoise was.

“No tortoise come here.”

“I don't believe you. The marks of a tortoise's feet stop here. You must have hidden it somewhere near here”

“You could check if you don't believe me.”

“Spread out your wings.”

The eagle spread out its right wing but gave the excuse that it could not lift its left wing because it was not good. The big snake looked closely and saw the legs of a tortoise from under the left wing of the eagle. So there was a fight between land animals and birds for sometimes.

2. THE FIGHT BETWEEN ANIMALS AND BIRDS

For helping the tortoise the eagle and snake had quarreled and that led to a fight between animals and birds. Birds had their headquarters at a big banyan tree where the animals came to attack them. The big snake hissed at the tree with such vigour that many of its branches fell down. Small birds trembled with



fright while all animals cheered at the prowess of the big snake. The snake again hissed. It seemed that the animals were about to win the battle.

The bat left the tree and joined the animals as it was more of a rat than a bird. Meanwhile, little birds attacked the worms and insects. The eagle made a desperate effort to snatch away the big snake. As the snake was wounded, all the birds cheered. The bat came back to the tree by saying that its power to fly qualified it to be called a bird. The big snake put out all its might and attacked the tree again. Unfortunately its head was caught in some branches of the tree. Before it could set itself free, the eagle took advantage of the situation and broke its spine. The snake died. The birds ceased all attack on the animals and therefore the battle was over.

All the creatures resumed their normal every day life except the bat. No one wanted to have anything to do with it. It was known to be insincere. That drove it to hide during the day and it had the courage to come out only at night.

3. THALUNGI

Thailung was a little girl who took pleasure in sitting just under the loom that her mother worked. One day as she sat under the loom as usual a vendor came shouting, “little iron balls for sale.” Her mother wanted to buy one of these balls for her son. She called the vendor and said :

“I want one of the balls. I have no money to pay though.

I have a young girl. Will you take her in exchange for it”

“Yes.”

“I will send Thailungi, that is my daughter’s name to fetch water. You may seize her when she comes out.

From under the loom, Thailungi heard it and wanted to run away into the forest. But her life would be worse in the forest. She had no choice. She was carried away by the vendor.



As the young boy played with the iron ball, his friends jeered at him by saying that he gave away one elder sister to get that ball. He went home and asked his mother whether it was true that he lost one sister to get that ball. His mother admitted that it was true. Then he asked permission to go in search for his lost sister. His mother, however, told him to wait a few years until he was old enough for any journey alone.

When he eventually came out to look for his sister, he met a wood cutter first. He asked the wood cutter the way to the place where he would find his elder sister Thailungi. He asked his help in return for one day in his work. He willingly did that and by the end of the day he was told in which direction he had to go to meet Thailungi. As he went on the met a man driving a herd of yaks. He asked the way and he got this reply.

“Help me with the herd and come along with me. I am going in that direction.”

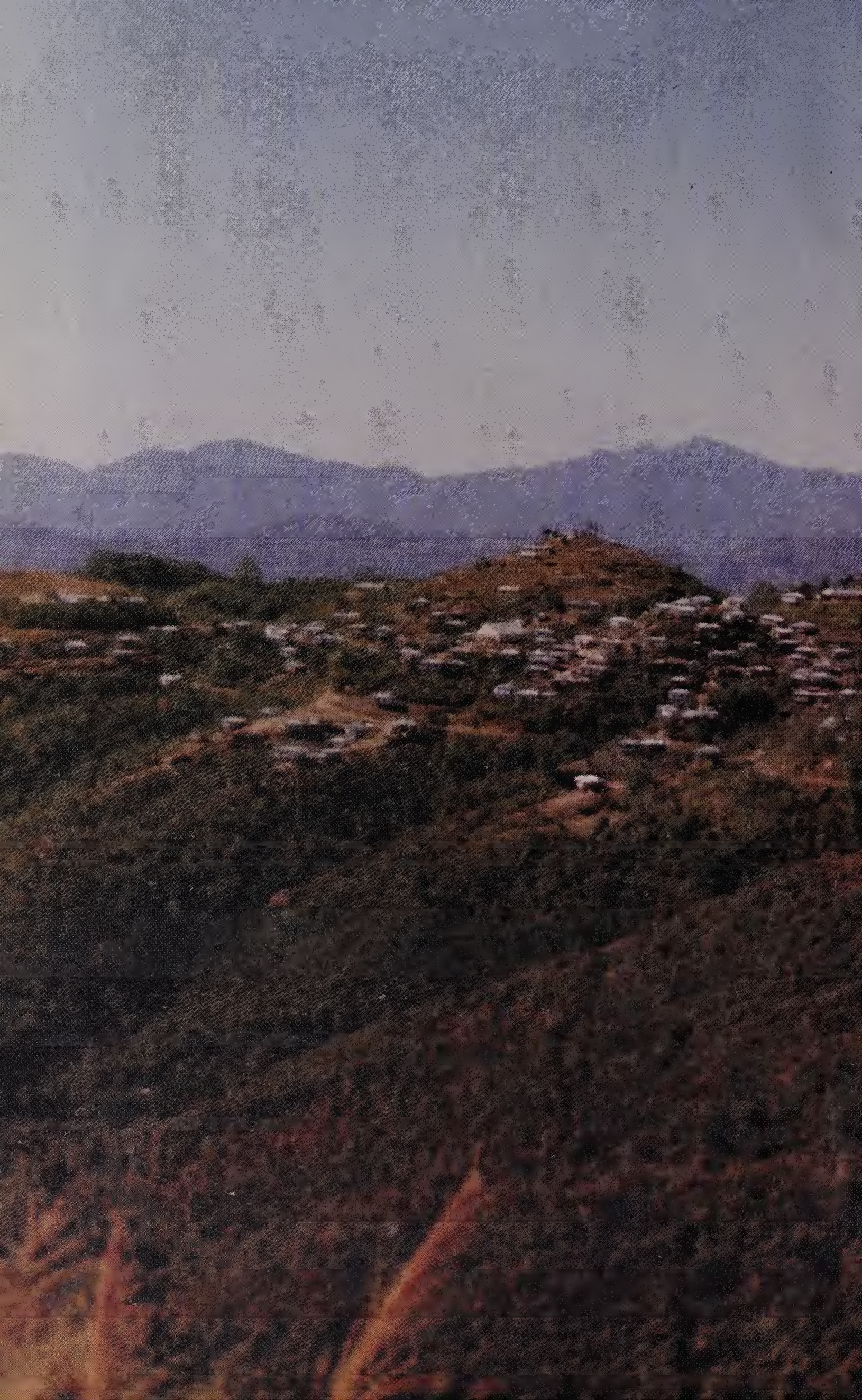
A few days went by. At last they came to a village. When he entered a house in that village, he met a very beautiful woman. It was Thailungi. They were very happy of the reunion and they lived in that village until they died.



‘Zawlbuk’ bachelor’s dormitory played an important role in the life of the Mizo for over two centuries. All the young men including boys more than 9 years old of the village used to sleep in the Zawlbuk. It was the centre for learning art, crafts, music, arms, sports, wrestling, community matters, administration etc. The traditions were passed from generation to generation.



Typical Mizo house



‘Live together on one hill-top, die together in one valley’ was the message of the Chief to start a village. The typical Mizo village is usually located on a hill with a good view of surroundings, good source of water supply and having advantage of being on alert to check activities of their enemies.





Wrestling was a game as a test of character and strength. A stranger or a traveller was mostly challenged to wrestle besides normal games in their community.



Mizo Poet's square at Khawbung village.

4. MAN WHO SHARPENED SWORDS

(Chemtatrakta)

One day a man who sharpened swords sat by the bank of a stream and started sharpening a sword. While he was thus engaged, a prawn pinched him on his testicles. With anger he cut a creeper that climbed up a bamboo near him. As it was a gourd



creeper, one gourd fell with his stroke and it hit a jungle fowl. The fowl in anger destroyed an ant hill. The ant in anger hit the wild pig's private parts. The wild pig in anger unearthed the roots of a banana plant where a bat lived. The bat in anger got inside the trunk of an elephant. The elephant in anger destroyed the hut of a widow. The widow in anger dirtied the stream used by all villagers. The matter was reported to the headman and he traced the culprit who made the water dirty. He found the widow. Then she explained that it was the elephant which made her angry. The elephant in turn said that it was the bat which made him angry. The bat in turn said that it was the pig, the pig, the ant, the ant the fowl, the fowl, the gourd, the gourd, the sword sharpener and the sword sharpener, the prawn. At last the prawn was asked why it did that mischief. It could give no suitable answer. But it gathered all its wits and said quickly.

“Look, I am a strange creature. Put me near fire and my complexion turns red. Put me in water, it becomes white.”

Out of curiosity the headman first put it near a fire. It turned red. Next he was put in the stream. It turned white and it ran to hide in the rocks. Villagers thrust sticks inside all the cracks in the rocks. So now prawns are ugly with distorted faces.

5. THE MISERABLE BOY

A man and his wife agreed not to say even a word of complaint for any hard work that they would have to do for a livelihood in the course of their married life. One day they had to carry heavy loads and the woman said that the load was too heavy for her. The man pushed her into the river for failing to keep her agreement not to grumble. They had one son and when he asked where his mother was, the father gave vague answers. He married again and the step-mother was cruel to the boy. He was never given enough food. The dead mother grew into a tree with sweet flowers. The boy ate them and inspite her step-mother starved him, he grew fat. On investigation she found out that he

was receiving nourishment from a new tree that grew near their home. She had it felled. The tree asked the boy to take a bit of wood from it and put it in the river. When the boy did that, the piece of wood turned into a big fish. Every day the boy went to the river bank to get little fishes caught for him by the big fish.

The boy's step-mother soon found from where and how he was getting food. She planned to poison the water by putting a poisonous root of a plant in it. The boy informed the big fish about his step-mother's plan. He asked the fish to move in the opposite direction when he shouted in order to avoid the poisoned water. Thus when he shouted "up stream" the fish went down stream and vice versa. In this way the fish evaded the poison. The step-mother gave the boy a sound beating. When the boy cried loudly the big fish appeared and swept the boy with its tail into the river and the boy was turned into a fish too.

6. THE TORTOISE AND THE MONKEY

Two friends lived together. One was a tortoise and another was a monkey. The monkey went up a fig tree for fruits and told the tortoise to follow it. When the tortoise told he could not climb a tree. The monkey told the tortoise to take hold of its tail as it climbed. The tortoise had no means of holding the tail except in its mouth and it felt that it would look funny clinging to a monkey's tail with its mouth. It wanted to laugh and as soon as it laughed it fell upon the ground and was hurt.

A few days later the tortoise suggested to dive into the river and catch fish. The monkey could not dive. But it could hold to the shell of the tortoise while it dived. The monkey had never had such an experience and every time it breathed, water got into its mouth. It made very loud gurgling sounds and the tortoise warned it to stop making the terrifying noise as it scared away the fish. The monkey was soon dead by drowning though the tortoise did not know it was drowned. It thought that the monkey

kept silent because of its advice. Many fish were caught and they were all put on the bank. The monkey remained silent. The tortoise divided the fish into two shares and told the monkey to take its share. The monkey remained silent. The tortoise did not know that it was dead. It said:

*“I try to be very fair in dividing
the fish into two shares.*

Perhaps you want more and you keep silent.

I don't mind giving you the whole lot.

Take it.”

So saying the tortoise left all fish near the dead monkey and went away.

7. CHHAWNLAHAWIHI

At one big town, there was once a big house which was built all in iron. Its owner was Chhawnlaihawihi. She had six elder and one younger brother. All the brothers loved her very much. One day she told her brothers that she wanted a sky flower. They all went to the forest and fell trees to make ladders to go up into the sky. The youngest brother came back home for provisions and Chhawnlaihawihi gave him the seven brother's food for three days.

Next day, a man called Bakvawmtepu disguised himself as the youngest brother and knocked at her door. As soon as she opened the door the man forcibly took her away. Three days had gone by. The youngest brother came home again for more provisions. He was alarmed to find the house empty. He went quickly back to the forest to inform his elder brothers. They all went in search of her. When they came to a country, the youngest brother asked the people to tell them where they could find their lost sister. They were told that they came in the right direction and they were sent on. They came to a place where two ridges of mountain were fighting as cocks do. When they tried to pass through these two ridges and they



were caught in the middle and crushed to death. The youngest brother became a dove, and it continued its quest of his sister. He shouted the sister's name and flew on until it came close to a house where Bakvawmtepu lived. Chhawnlaihawihhi instantly recognised the voice as her youngest brother's and opened the door to let him inside the house. Bakvawmtepu was absent. The dove turned into a baby. She hid the baby in the house. When Bakvawmtepu came back, she told him that since they had no child of their own she wanted to adopt a baby. He agreed and she produced the baby. He loved the child and gave it eggs daily. It grew into a strong young man. To test his strength, he blackened his face and went to wrestle with Bakvawmtepu while he was at work in the fields. He won. The man did not know that he was the adopted son. Since that day the young man and Chhawnlaihawihhi plotted to kill Bakvawmtepu.

One day the woman asked her man:

“Who is your creator?”

“The big dove of red wings. Tell me yours too.”

“The big fish of the river.”

“I must go and play with fish.”

He went to the river and spent his leisure time playing with the fish. In the meanwhile the young man went to the big dove of red wings. He was very civil with the dove and got several things from the dove to play with. He handled these things with care and gave them back to the dove all in good condition. Soon the dove trusted him and gave him the most rare things to play with. That included dove eggs as well. Next day he was given a young dove to play with. He was warned that no harm should come to his young dove because it was the counterpart of Bakvawmtepu. He brought it back to Chhawnlaihawihhi and instructed her to break its wing first while he was engaged in a wrestle with Bakvawmtepu. Then she was to break its legs. Lastly she was to break its neck.

As they wrestled she did what she was told by the young man and in this way Bakvawmtepu was killed. Chhawnlaihawihhi came back to their old iron home with the young man. On their way they found the dead bodies of their elder brothers. They took tree leaves that no one had touched before and she touched the dead bodies with these leaves. All dead brothers returned to life. When they got to their iron home they found it very rusty. They went up to the house. It broke and fell. They fell too and all eight got killed.

8. A FATHER WHO ABANDONED HIS TWO SONS

There once lived a very cruel and bad man. His wife who had two sons with him was dead. He married again. The step-mother did not like these sons. She often asked her husband

whom he liked best – his sons or his wife. He did not say anything. One day the wife went to the field of crops where there were many mosquitoes. Because of their bites her face and several parts of her body were swollen. But she told her husband that his sons had attacked her and as a result she had several injuries on her body. She also added a demand. He was to decide whom he loved best. If it was the wife whom he loved best he was to abandon his two sons. He answered that he loved her best and agreed to abandon the sons. He took them into the forest and he dug a big pit. He explained that it was the best shelter against storm and heavy rain. He told them to stay inside the pit and covering it, he left. The boys tried to climb up the pit but they could not do so. Between them, they had only one knife. But they made steps using the knife and they succeeded to get out. By then they were almost at the point of collapse from starvation. But they tried to locate where they were and how to find their way home. The elder brother went up a tree to find out the way. Upon the tree he found a big nest with eggs. He sent down few eggs but all were broken. So he put one egg in his mouth to take it to his younger brother. Unfortunately the egg got into his throat and he had to swallow it. The effect was that he was changed into a bird. The bird told the boy on the ground to follow its shadow as it flew towards home. As it was a very thick forest, it was not easy to follow the bird and soon the boy was alone in the forest. A wild cat came and the boy requested it to show the way home. The cat told him to wait until it had killed a fowl so that it could drop the feathers to show the way. It kept its promise and the way shown by the cat led to a village. In that village the young boy grew up into man. He also succeeded in saving enough money to give a big feast. Free food was given to all the invited guests. His guests included birds with the hope that his brother bird would also come to the feasts he gave. He did come. But he told his former brother to come with it to a much better place. It requested all birds to give a few feathers each to the man so

that he could see them and fly like a bird. When enough feathers were collected the man used them and flew away to a promised land to enjoy a better life.

9. THE MONKEY'S FLUTE AND THE BUSTARD QUAIL

Three once lived a monkey which had a flute of most sweet notes. It was found to be playing it almost all the time. One bastard quail like the music and wanted to get that flute from the monkey by any means. It went to the monkey and said.

"Your mother excepted you to go and fetch water."

"Here we are. All pots are filled with water."

"Your mother expected you to feed the chicken to."

"Here, they are already fed – chicks, cocks and hens."

The bird told the monkey several other works to do. At last the bird said:

"You have done quite a lot of work. Have rest, will you? Your mother wanted this too."

"Good, I deserve a good rest."

While the monkey slept, the bird tried to steal the flute. But the monkey woke up too soon. When this ruse failed, the bird made a direct approach.

"Allow me to try your flute, please."

"Mn, I felt that I could not trust you with it."

"Why don't you take a good hold of my tail while I handle your precious flute."

"All right, on that security, I can trust you with it."

While the bird played the flute, the monkey took a firm hold on its tail. Suddenly the bird tried to escape and it did escape minus the tail.

After some time the quail came back to the monkey to get back its tail.

"Give me eight of your feathers from your wings."

"No, I could not fly without them. It would be worse than having no tail."

10. THE FATHER OF SEVEN SONS

Once a father went hunting with his seven sons. On their return from the trip they saw a very big creeper and the father told his sons to try their strength to cut that creeper by one single stroke of their cutlasses and if they failed, they would have to sleep at night by the tiger's path alone. The youngest son tried first, he cut it clean with one single stroke. All other six sons did the same. It was the father who could not cut it with one stroke. Abiding by his words and ignoring the requests of his sons, he went to sleep by the tiger's path. In the morning, his sons found that he was killed by a tiger. For revenge they followed the track of the tiger.

On their way they met an old man who was making a stone quern. They asked him where the tiger that killed their father was. The old man told him to help him in his work first. They helped but they thought it would take too much time and they left. Next day they met an old woman reaping the sesame crop. She also told them to help her if they wanted to know where the tiger was. They thought it would take too much time to help her and so they continued their way and came to an old woman's house. She told them to kill her pig and she would tell them where the tiger was. They agreed. She called and a piglet came first. They prepared to kill it but the old woman said it was not the one she wanted to have killed. She called again and there came a very big pig. The arrows they shot did not even pierce its skin. They left her and continued their way. Fortunately they met the tiger. It welcomed them and gave them food to eat. They did not know that they were eating their father when they ate the meat

the tiger gave. At night the tiger set a rat to cut up their bow strings.

Next day they told the tiger that they were leaving. The tiger came with them part of the way to bid goodbye. It brought with it a basket and when asked why it brought it, it said it would collect fruits on its way back. When they asked how it killed their father it denied that it was the tiger that had killed father. When they asked again, it growled and killed all seven of them. The basket it brought along was used to take their meat back home.

When the seven brothers did not return, their only sister had to stay alone at their house. She cried and cried and at last Pu Vana, lord of the spiritual world took pity on her and sent her a fruit. She ate it and she conceived a son. When the baby was born, it was found to be very strong. At the age of one, it could catch rats as skillfully as a cat. It grew into a boy to played with. Out of despise, his play mates called him "Bastard" (Palova-fatherless). He asked his mother and she explained how the lord of the spiritual world sent him to her to get a revenge on the tiger. In fact he was a son of the lord of the spiritual world and he should wait until he was fully grown up and when his father gave him suitable weapons to deal with his fearful enemy.

Eventually a set of brass bow and arrows and an iron spear were sent from the lord of the spiritual world and armed with these formidable weapons he set out on a journey to find the tiger that killed his grandfather and seven uncles. As he went on he met an old man coming from an opposite direction carrying a bamboo. When asked where the tiger was, he was told first to chop up the bamboo and to make it whole again. When he did what he was told, the old man said that he had the ability to destroy the tiger and gave him directions how to find his enemy. Next he met an old woman who asked him to kill her pig, which was an exceptionally big one. Two men were present when he was about to send an arrow to kill it and he warned them to move out of the direction that the

arrow would come. Being skeptical that he would not even harm the big pig they ignored his warning. He shot the animal on the heads with his bow and the arrow not and only killed the pig but it went right through the head and killed the two men too before it went nearly half of its length into the ground. No one could retrieve the arrow from the ground except Palova. The old woman cooked the pork and fed him well. Then she gave him directions how to find the tiger. She also warned him not eat any meat that the tiger gave.

Palova met the tiger which welcomed him and gave him food to eat. In fact the meat was the flesh of his uncles. When he dropped the meat from a hole in the floor, cock cried that the guest was throwing away the meat. But a pig corrected it by saying that the things thrown were only bones. The next day Palova said he was going back and the tiger came with a basket to follow him to some distance before bidding him goodbye. When Palova asked the tiger growled. He quickly climbed up a tree and peeled off all the bark from the main trunk of the tree. Without the barks, the tiger could not climb up the tree. He carefully armed and shot the tiger between the two eyes. The tiger died instantly. He cut off the tiger's head and brought it with him.

During Palova's absence many evil spirits came in the guise of Palova and knocked at his mother's home to gain entrance. The mother was cautious. She looked through a peep hole in the door and suspecting that some mischief was afoot she refused to open the door. Even when Palova himself turned up with a tiger's head in his hand she refused to open the door. So he said:

"Remain shut if you must. I have one word of caution though. Don't touch the whiskers of the tiger's head."

He left the head at the entrance to their home and went to visit his father, Pu Vana. His mother came out of the house and touched the whiskers of the tiger's head. She fell down and

became a spirit. Pu Vana was glad to see his son but he did not let his daughter meet him first. He called them and asked what would be their attitude if they had a brother. They replied that they would be very happy and they would love him with kindness and they changed his name to Chhuanvawra (we take Pride of you). His father gave him one instruction. It was that he should not go up the hill and look beyond. A few days later he went up the hill and looked beyond. He saw a very big and prosperous country. He came down and asked Pu Vana what was that country. His father replied that it was the country ruled by Hrileia, his arch-enemy. Then Chhuanvawra said that he would fight and conquer his father's enemy. His sisters were against this idea and they had his bow and arrow. He tried to get back his weapons and started the battle. His father warned him that he would meet several people impersonating Hrileia but when the real Hrileia came, a heavy rain would fall and the rain drops would be as big as aborigines. If he had a chance to shoot at him, he must take the most careful aim. In the battle, Chhanvawra killed many hundreds of enemies. He took the tips of tongue and ears of every enemy he killed. His followers took the heads. When the real Hrileia appeared all his followers fled. But they two fought the most fearful battle and at last Hrileia was killed. Chhuanvawra cut off Hrileia's head and left the battle ground with that head in his hand.

Pu Vana received well those soldiers who came back from the battle with the enemy heads. When he asked where his son was, they reported that he had fled. He was very much ashamed of his son's cowardice and he refused to see him if he ever came back. When he actually turned up it was the spirit woman who was his mother who received him first and he told her that he killed most of the enemy and he had with him the tips of tongue and ears of each enemy he killed. On checking the heads brought over by soldiers before he arrived, she found that these heads had no tips on the tongue and ears. She reported this Pu Vana and made it clearly known that it was her son or Pu vana's son who killed most of them enemies including their leader who

was the worst enemy of Pu Vana. When Chhuanvawra met his father, he handed over to him his water gourd and when his father put his mouth to the gourd to drink one of the car ornaments of Hrileia fell one the tooth of Pu Vana and broke it. The ornaments was put on top of a bamboo and set up in front of his home. Hrilei's soul took the shape of a kite and came to snatch it away. Chhuanvawra shoot and killed that bird.

One day a big bird's, feather was found stuck in the ground in front of Chhuanvawra's home. No one could pull it out. When Chhuanvawra tried he got it out easily. But at the same moment that it was pulled out Chhuanvawra fell down dead.

11. THE EGG AND THE STICK

An egg and a stick once met and became very good friends. Both were farmers. Both of them worked in each other's field and ate their meal together in a hut when the work was over. One day, when they were about to eat, they found that none of them had any curry to eat with the rice. The egg told its friend to wait. It went out to get something to eat with and brought back a fried egg which both ate with relish.

One day the rain was pouring non-stop. They wanted to cook and to keep themselves warm. But there was no firewood and no fire. The stick said that it would go out to get fire. It went and broke itself into little pieces and set fire to these pieces and came back with fire and fuel. They happily cooked their food and warmed themselves by the fire.

12. NUCHHIMI AND HMUICHUKCHURUDUNI

Nuchhimi and her young sister were invited by their aunt to dinner with an instruction that they must follow a path that was well swept to reach her home. While they talked with long pouting lip was outside the bamboo wall and she heard everything.

She wanted to eat the little sister through deception and she swept clean the path leading to her house. As she had planned, the two sisters came to her house in the evening. They were given good food and after the meal the witch told them to pass the night with her and asked the younger sister to sleep with her. In the middle of the night Nuchhimi heard her little sister cry out and asked what was wrong. The witch replied that it was the bugs that disturbed the young girl in her sleep and therefore one cried a little but there was nothing worry about. In fact she had killed the girl and drunk her blood and eaten her flesh. Only the bones were left in a heap near the fire place. Early next day, Nuchhimi knew what had happened. She cried but she was told to stop crying as she would be killed soon and eaten.

After having eaten her breakfast, the witch bound Nuchhimi with a rope and put her in a basket. The basket was then hanged up to the beam under the roof. She then told the girl that she would give her something to eat when she came back and left the house to work in the field. Soon after she left, Nuchhimi saw a rat and requested it to cut the rope that bound her. The rat comply and as soon as she was free she ran back to her relatives and told them what had happened. They all were angry and went in a group to the house of the witch. They decided to tortured her before killing. They put an egg in the fireplace, a snake in the bamboo tube kept for water and ants in her bed. They also smeared excreta on the bed posts and fixed caltrops. In order to deceive the witch that the girl was still remained a prisoner the rat was told to mimic the girl and talk with the witch. They also left a dog, a pig, a goat and a yak in the house.

In the evening the witch came back. She had brought a pregnant doe. She ordered:

“Nuchhimi, open the door.”

“You left me a prisoner, How can I open it?”

It was the rat that answered her. She got angry and broke open the door. She looked and found that the prisoner had escaped. She went to the fire place to warm herself. The egg broke and



dirtied her face. She went to wash and the snake in the water tube bit her. She jumped into the bed and ants bit her. She pulled herself up from bed by using the bed post and excreta smeared on her dirtied her hands. She rubbed her hands on the wall and caltrops got into her hands. In fright she jumped down from the house and the dog, pig, goat and yak attacked her and she was killed by these animals.

13. THE BEAR'S POND

In order to get the water supply all the year around, a bear had a pond of his own. He guarded it well against all intruders and

during his absence from his lair, it had a small monkey left on guard duty. A boar came to drink the water and the small monkey shouted: "Would you dare drink it" and it did not dare drink it. A deer came and the small monkey shouted: "Would you dare drink it" and it did not dare drink it. Others came and left without disturbing the pond until a tiger came. Bear or no bear, it was thirsty. The small monkey shouted loud that a challenger had come. The bear came quickly and a fierce fight ensued where both the tiger and the bear were killed. The small monkey selected the choicest piece of bone from their remains to make a flute and was most happy to play it.

14. SICHANGNEII

There was a pond near a farm and the farmer had to use water from it for drinking. But one day he found the water muddy. It continued to be like that for a few more days and he was most annoyed. He concealed himself near the pond and waited to know what had caused to spoil the pond water. He did not have to wait long. A beautiful but woman came flying to the pond and bathed in it. He captured the fairy and forcibly took out all feathers and destroyed her wings. She was now grounded and he took her as his wife. Five wonderful sons were born to the union. Each one of them had a supernatural power because their mother was a spiritual being. The first son had exceptionally strong eyes. The second one was the best archer. The third could hide anything most safely. The fourth could get through any obstacle and the last one was of exceptional strength.

On occasions the mother went to the farm and the father played with the sons. When it was the father's turn to go, the sons expressed displeasure because it was dull to stay with mother. When she asked them to say what made them so happy to stay with father, they replied that he allowed them to play with some feathers.

"Feathers, what? Show them to me."

"Sorry, mother, we do not know where father hid them."



“Oh! What a pity. I want to see them so much.”

The youngest son wanted to please her. He led her to the hiding place. She put the feathers on herself.

“Sons, look! I look beautiful with these feathers, don’t I?”

“No, you certainly do not look beautiful at all with these feathers.”

The youngest son would not say a lie to his dear mother.

“You look awfully lovely in them, mother.”

“Thank you, youngest son.”

So saying she went up the sky and flew away from all of them. Her body shone like a star. The father died because of the loss of his beloved wife.

The brother with powerful eyes looked and saw their mother pounding rice into powder. The archer brother sent an arrow to cause a hole in the box that contained flour and the falling flour showed them the way up the sky which they followed. They met their mother and lived together most happily. But one old man of the fairy world hated to see them all happy. One day he persuaded them to follow him into the forest where he felled many trees with a hope to crush them to death. But the brother of mighty scattered the fallen trees and saved all of them. Next the old man took them again to a forest where there were plenty of dry leaves. He set fire to the leaves. The brother who was expert in hiding things hid them in a big hole and all of them were saved from being burnt to death. When their mother came to know about she urged them to go back to the place of human beings with a warning not to look up where she lived. Because the old man could make them blind if they looked up.

One day all five brothers missed their mother very much and forgetting her warning, they looked up where she lived. This gave the old man his chance to make them all blind.

Five blind brothers went to the river to catch prawns. When they divided the catch into equal shares, they found that there was a stranger among them trying to take a share for himself. They seized him and split open his head with stones. The brain fell out from his skull and hit their eyes. That made them regain their eyesight. They lived happily together for the rest of their lives.

15. CHAWNGCHILHI

Tt their slashed and burned cultivation plot, Chawngchilhi and her younger sister worked. They were given food by their

parents to eat at during the course of their work. Yet, the young girls got more and more thin. They knew it was starvation and they checked why this happened. The young girl said that the elder sister had a snake for a lover and she sang a song the snake appeared and ate all their food. The father was angry, he went to the cultivation plot with the young daughter. There he told the girl to sing and entice the snake to come.

When it came, the father cut it into three pieces and killed it. They did not tell that to Chawngchilhi. Next day she went to



their cultivation plot and called the snake by a song as usual. It did not come and she went to look around. She found her lover being cut up into three pieces. She brought these pieces home. Their father was sleeping at the entrance to the house, one piece of dead snake fell on the chest of her father. He got up with anger and cut up Chawngchilhi into several pieces. As she was killed, several small snakes came out of her womb. Her father also killed them except one. It escaped into a crack in the earth and it grew into a big snake. It swallowed chickens. Then it swallowed dogs.

The villagers one day tried to catch it by a noose. But it slipped into a hole. People tried to draw it out but they failed to do so. At last they dug up the hole and cut it to several pieces. The pieces were then cooked and eaten. Its head was given a widow. She put it in a pot and boiled it. When she touched it with a ladle it shouted to her to be careful so as not to spoil its eyes with it. She was so frightened with it that she threw it out. It fell on a field for gourds and one gourd grew as big as a house. When night fell, cocks warned by crowing that all strangers should leave that village. Soon there was a big land slide from the nearby hill and except the widow, all villagers who ate the snake got killed.

16. THE SWING AND THE MONKEY

A monkey made a swing and spent almost all time riding it with a song. A bear saw it and asked for permission to try it. The monkey told it to wait while it checked the ropes so that they could stand the weight of the bear. In fact it bit them and made them weak. When the bear rode the swing the ropes snapped and it fell. The monkey thought the bear was dead. It had a broth ready and with an intention to take it with bear meat it went to what it thought was the remains of the bear. As soon as it came close to it, the monkey knew that it was mistaken. The bear was alive.

“I’m so sorry that you had this trifle accident,

take this hot broth.”

“Well, we haven’t any cup to put the broth, have we?”

“Get your belly flattened and extend it a little. I shall pour the broth on it.”

The broth was very hot indeed. When poured on the belly of the bear, it burnt all the hair on it.

17. SAMDALA

Samdala was lazy – amazingly lazy. One day he went alone into the forest and fortunately he found a big fig tree full of good ripe fruit. Instead of climbing up the tree to get the fruit, he lay down on the ground and had his mouth open. He ate the fig only when it directly fell into his open mouth. Even when it fell into the mouth, he would not immediately chew it. He would wait until the teeth unintentionally did the process of chewing. While he was thus enjoying the good taste of figs with the least of effort, a tiger suddenly appeared. He was too lazy to run and save himself.

“Wait, Tiger, Kill and eat me if you must but carry me up to that mountain ridge.”

The tiger took him there.

“Wait, Tiger. Allow me a few minutes.”

Then he turned on his back and put a very red fruit on it.

“Now, Tiger, I’m ready.”

“What’s that on your back?”

“You don’t recognise it as the thing that eats up all animals and men most ravenously, do you?”

“There, there...”

The tiger ran in fright. He threw a stone in the direction that the tiger ran and that increased the rate with which it ran.

Samdala next smeared himself completely with tree gum and rolled among the dry leaves. That made him look awfully funny. A deer came along and saw him. It began to start laughing. Soon it was joined by a pig, and several other animals that laughed too.

Then a tortoise came. All animals asked it whether it knew that funny man.



“I’m afraid to reveal his identity. He would kill me,”
“Don’t brother. Get up on the top of the head of the deer
between the antlers. It would run most fast and save you
from him,” said the animals.

“Right, help me onto that high seat,” said the tortoise.

When the tortoise was seated on top of the deer, it said:

“Why? You would not recognise him as Samdala, would you?”

Samdala got up to kill tortoise. All the animals fled. As the deer carrying the tortoise started to run, the tortoise fell from his seat and was left to the mercy of Samdala.

18. KELCHAWNGI

Kelchawngi was told by her mother to cook a pumpkin and went to the farm. She had not hear her mother properly.



Instead of 'mai' meaning pumpkin, she heard "nau" meaning young sister. The young sister was cooked. When the parents came home they asked where was her young sister. She replied that the girl was cooked as per her instruction. They blamed her for being so foolish and cruel and put her on the roof where she remained the whole night. She pleaded mercy but her parents refused to let her down.

At last she made a request addressed to the lord of the spiritual world to send down a rope with which she could climb up to the abode of the spirits. The rope was let down and she climbed up. At the abode of the spirits, she was given their dress. When she was so dressed she came back to her heir house roof. She was all bright with a dress which also produced some soft jingling noises. Her parents heard this and looked. Seeing her in strange dress they requested her to come down. She said no to their request. She simply came back to let them know of her good fortune and went back to the abode of the spirits.

19. CHHURBURA

Chhurbura was the most stupid and most ignorant of men that ever lived. One day he went to the forest to collect fire wood. He saw a tiger but he did not know it to be a dreadful animal. When he got home he told his wife about a red big animal he was in the forest. His wife said that it was a tiger that should kill him and so he was to be afraid of such a red animal next time he came across. Chhura, that was the short form of his name, next saw his wife bringing home flowers with red leaves. He took a spear and it was very fortunate that his wife was not killed then and there.

In another instance he was left with their child at home. The child cried and he could not stop crying. He investigated why it cried so much and saw a soft spot on top of the head, rising in slow rhythm. He reasoned that it was the cause of the child's incessant crying. He cut it open and let out the brain. The child died though he thought it was cured of its pain and therefore it slept well.

Nahaia or Naa was Chhura's best friend. He was a cunning man and he used to take advantage of Chhura's stupidity. The farmland of both of them were situated side by side and close to Naa hunted them by throwing stones and unfortunately the stones he threw hit the female spirit of the tree and her family. The spirit became angry and threatened to take revenge on him through her spiritual powers. Naa thought that if the ownership of the farmland be changed, any harm that the female spirit could do would fall on the new owner. With this idea in his mind he went to Chhura and proposed that they should change ownership of their land. He said that his plot had more plants growing than Chhura's plot. When looking at a plot from the ground level, anyone would think that the plants grew there very thick but from a certain height by climbing a tree the same person could find that the plants were not growing as thick as he thought them to be. Knowing this Naa showed his plot from the ground level and told Chhura to go and look at his own plot from a tree. Chhura was convinced that his plot was poor and agreed to the change.

Next day Chhura went to his new plot. He saw the tree where there were many birds. He also wanted to eat some birds and he started to throw stones at them. The female spirit told him to stop throwing stones because he was doing some injury to her children. He ignored her and continued throwing. The spirit went to his hut and waited for his return there to harm him when he came home. The spirit sat on a swing in that hut and Chhura saw her before she saw. He approached the house quietly and climbed on to the roof. From there he seized the hair of the spirit. The spirit requested not to pull at its hair so hard and it would give him a sword he would free it. When he replied that he had a sword and it changed its offer to a lance, an axe, an ox, a buffalo, all of which Chhura refused to accept. At last it offered to give the most precious thing it had. It was the 'Sekibuhchhuak,' the magic horn of a yak. At any time one could blow this horn and any kind of food that one wished to eat would appear. Chhura accepted the horn and set it free.

Having the free supply of the best food, Chhura and his family stopped working. Naa knew it and with the intention to get the magic horn he told Chhura that if there were any fire he should throw out the horn out of his window to save it from being destroyed by fire. A few days later Naa went near Chhura's home and set fire to a few bushes and shouted "Fire! Fire!" and Chhura threw the horn out of the window. Thus Naa got the magic horn very easily.

Chhura wanted to get back to the magic horn from Naa and so he told Naa that in case of fire he should throw out the horn from the window in order to save it from fire. Soon after that he went near Naa's home and shouted "Fire! Fire!" He did not realise that he could not trick his cunning friend using the same method that he had used to trick him. Naa threw out from his window a heavy pebble which hit Chhura on the foot. Instead of the magic horn, he received an injury on his foot.

One day Chhura and Naa went to the forest together. On top of a hill, they saw a flying horse. They silently approached the horse and when it started flying Chhura caught one of its legs and he was carried up into the sky. Naa seized Chhura's feet and he too was carried up. After some time Chhura said that his hands were getting very tired as they had to carry the weight of two human bodies. Therefore he said Naa must take his place. Naa replied that in the middle of the sky, such a change was impossible. As Naa was always playing tricks on him, Chhura did not believe him. So he warned Naa that if he did not take his place he would let go his grip on the horse's leg. Naa repeated his words of argument, he let go of his hold on the horse's leg and both Chhura and Naa fell on the ground and died.

20. CHHURA MADE A TRIP THAT ENDED IN HIS OWN HOME

A big earthen vessel was the only precious possession left to the poor family of Chhura. The children were hungry. The

wife told Chhura to take the vessel to the market and sell it but she warned him not to put it down on the way and he should change sides if one shoulder got tired of carrying it. So he went from morning till noon. His shoulder got tired and he wanted to change sides but he did not know how to do it without putting the vessel down on the ground. All of a sudden he got a bright idea. He turned around and he was satisfied to find that the vessel was on another side. He walked until evening when his own children came out to welcome him.

21. CHHURA WANTED A BLANKET IN DAYTIME AND AXE AT NIGHT

Chhura and Naa once got a blanket and an axe. Both got a right to use them but Chhura said:

“I choose to have the blanket by day and the axe by night.”

So every day he was seen sweating by being wrapped up in a blanket and shivering at night with an axe in hand.

22. CHHURA HAD A FLY TO SELL

One day Chhura caught a beautiful fly in his hand. He cried:

“Folks come here to have a look at the most beautiful insect that ever lived on this earth.”

“Where is it?”

“In my hand.”

“Open your hand and show it.”

“But you must pay me for having a chance to look at it.”

“We won’t pay unless we know it’s pretty.”

“You shall have to pay even if it flies away.”

He opened his hand and the fly flew away and he got paid for showing it to them.

23. CHHURA ESCAPED BY USING A SIMPLE RUSE

Every morning when Chhura went to his field on the side of a hill to work, he called: "Is anybody in there," to check that there was none hiding inside the little hut. It never occurred to him that if an enemy was there he should keep quiet. In fact there were enemies inside the hut and they remained silent. When he entered the hut he was taken prisoner and send off to a village where he would be made a slave. When they had come some distance, they got on the side of a steep hill. Then Chhura said that he had a thorn in one of his legs and unless it was taken out, he could not go on. So saying he sat at a spot where his enemies had to sit in line on the steep side of the hill. While every body's attention was engaged in the thorn, he suddenly gave a big push to the man nearest him and that man fell against the man next to him and that man fell against another man next to him and so on and all his enemies fell down the slope. He escaped.

24. CHHURA SWAPPED THE HOUSE

Chhura inherited his father's house which was good. His friend Naa had to build his own house. But Naa's house was badly build. One day Naa came to suggest Chhura to change houses:

"No, the roof of your house has many holes."

"It's made like that to observe the stars."

"I like the idea."

So their houses were changed. Soon rain came and Chhura had all the trouble of making a new roof.

25. CHHURA GOT WILD POTATOES OF POOR QUALITY

Once Chhura and Naa went to the forest to dig wild potatoes. Chhura tried to get very good ones while Naa did not make much efforts and he had gathered only those of poor quality. On their way home they stopped at a stream to wash their collections. Naa took his position up a stream and Chhura down stream. Every time Naa saw Chhura handling a wild potato a good size, he would say that it was his which was carried down by the current. In this way Chhura was left with only wild potatoes of poor quality.

26. CHHURA THREATENED TO TAKE AWAY HIS HALF PART OF THE MITHUN

Chhura and Naa once owned a cow-mithun together. Chhura was told by Naa that each of them owned only one half of the animal and the head part was his. As the owner of the tail part, Chhura was responsible to take away the cow dung and clean the place where the cow was kept. After some time Chhura said that he had to do all the hard work and so he wanted to change the ownership from being the owner of the tail part to being the owner of the head part. It was agreed. Soon after the change was made, the cow gave birth to a calf and Naa said it was his because it was produced from the part that he owned. Chhura said that then both should own the calf and if his share was denied, he intended to take away his half of the mithun. Thus Chhura got his right on the calf too.

27. CHHURA LOST THE ART OF WHISTLING

At one village not his own, Chhura heard a young man whistling. He was very much pleased with it and he had never done it himself before. So he learnt whistling. He continued whistling as he came out of that village. He passed through a forest where the path was very rough. He slipped rather badly. He stood up and continued his walk but he forgot his new art. He retraced his steps to look for it. He met another travelers who volunteered to help him.

“What is that you have lost?”

“If I know what it is. I wouldn’t be looking for it.”

The man puzzled, whistled.

“There! I got it back.”

Without a word of thanks or saying good-bye, he continued his way home whistling.

28. CHHURA BECAME RICH

In the course of his travels, Chhura came to a village where no one had the habit of discarding any bowel refuse because they were not provided with an anus. Villagers were amazed to see that he answered the call of nature in the morning. On inquiry, he answered casually that his mother pierced a hole by hot iron while he was still young. Then he left the village.

The villagers followed his story and tried on their children. All their children died. They came after him to punish him for giving them wrong and dangerous information. Seeing many armed men in hot pursuit he hid in a hollow log. As all tracks were lost near the log, they stopped. One young man said that he would like to cut Chhura to pieces as he would do to a dry wood and he hacked the hollow log with his cutlass. From within the log, Chhura shouted

in despair and he was caught. All villagers surrounded him and tried to hold him. He said:

“Look. There are many of you and each one want to hold me. My suggestion is that instead of crowding around me, all of you go to my rear side and each lay his one single hand only on one part of my body.”

As they lined up to follow his advice, he broke loose and ran. He climbed a big tree. The villagers started to cut the tree at the base .

“Wait. I would like to help you in felling the tree.”

He climbed down and helped them in felling the tree. As it fell, he ran again. They ran after him and managed to catch him. He was bound with a rope and put in a basket. The basket was left dangling from a bridge over the river. The river was rising and he would be drowned soon. The villagers left.

In the meanwhile, a Pawi came to the bridge: Chhura threatened him:

“There. Come and pull me up on the bridge. If you don’t obey me you shall be killed.”

When he got on the bridge, he ordered the man to untie the ropes that bound him.

“It was very good to ride on this basket. Would you like to try it?”

“Yes.”

The Pawi was bound and put in the basket and the basket was hung from the bridge. Then he took the luggage brought by the simple Pawi who happened to be a rich man and the luggage he carried contained many valuable things. It went to the village of his enemies and showing them the rich things he has said:

“Here. I got these from the river bed which still has plenty more of them. Go get them quick.”

All men went and all of them got drowned. The women of the village waited long for their men to come back. When they did not come they went to the river to check. While they were away Chhura extinguished all the fire in the whole village except the fire over which he guarded. When the womenfolk came back mourning and wanted to cook they had to buy fire from Chhura at the price he named. Chhura in this way became a very rich man.

29. A STONE THAT TOLD LIES

Ruallung was a village where a most mysterious stone was located. It could speak and it often warned the villagers to be careful when the head-hunters were coming. One day it gave a similar alarm and the villagers hastily armed themselves for a defensive fight. Unfortunately or fortunately the enemies did not come. The villagers, however, were angry for the false alarm. When the false alarm was given for the second time, the villagers broke the top part of the stone so that it looked like a beheaded man and it was standing in the village as a constant reminder to all those people to avoid telling lies.

30. TWO SISTERS WENT IN SEARCH OF CUCUMBERS

Of the two sisters who went in search of cucumbers, only the younger sister found plentiful of them. The elder sister asked her young sister to give her one cucumber as she was feeling very thirsty. She asked repeatedly but was refused. So she sang a request to the earth to swallow her. The rich soil where the ants made their hill actually welled up and enveloped her. The young sister ran home in fright and told the parents what had happened. They sent her back to the forest to bring back her elder sister. She went and sang that their parents had bought for her sister many brass ornaments so that she should come home

and collect them. Very slowly she emerged from the earthen hill that covered her. Before she was totally free the young sister stopped singing. Part of the old sisters feet was left in the soil. From those remains, mushrooms grew out every year.

31. VANCHUNGNULA

Vanchungnula belonged to the spiritual world and she was extremely beautiful. All males who had a chance of seeing her, loved her and wanted to possess her too. There were seven brothers and the youngest of them was Tlumtea. Each of them wanted to marry her too. One day the seven brothers adorned themselves in their best of arrays and went to Vanchungnula. On their way, whomever they met, they asked:

“We are on our way to pay court to Vanchungnula.

Among the seven of us, whom do you think looks most handsome?”

And they got only one answer – Tlumtea was the most handsome of them all. The six elders became jealous and they ordered the youngest to go back home. At the abode of the spirits, Vanchungnula received the six brothers well and reported their arrival to her father stating who they were and why they came. Her father asked what was her opinion. She replied that she could not love anyone of them. Her father told her to give them a meal of rice only and send them back to the abode of human beings. When the elder brothers came back and admitted defeat, Tlumtea went up to the spiritual world alone. On his way, he saw an eagle chasing a small bird. He gave protection to the little bird and saved it.

Vanchungnula saw Tlumtea and readily accepted his love. This was duly reported to her father. He told her to give him a meal of rice and curry and send him back home. She fed him well but she did not like to send him home. When this was again reported to her father, he called him and asked many questions to prove his intelligence. One question was to show which section

of their home was the honoured part and he replied that it was the western section. His answer was correct. Next he was asked which part of the pillars in their palace was the top and he replied that it was the part that was sunk in the ground. He was correct again. As the last and hardest, Tlumtea was given a big cup and told to bring water with it without wetting any part of the outside of the cup. He was at his wits end and he wished for the small bird he had saved to come and help him. It came and brought water in its beak several times and emptied them in the cup. Eventually the cup was filled with water. When the cup was brought back to the lord of the spiritual world, he was so pleased that he married Tlumtea to his daughter. He brought the bride home.

On the journey home, Tlumtea became thirsty, he left the bride on a tree and went in search of water. In the meanwhile, a female tree spirit set at the root of the tree where the bride took off its own scalp to rid of lice. While it was busy like this, it saw the reflection of the bride fully dressed with all her ornaments. The tree spirit had on it no ornament but the reflection had ornaments. In spite of this fact, it thought that the reflection it saw was its own and with the thought that it had suddenly been changed into a very pretty person decorated with various ornaments, it started singing and dancing. The bride thought it was very funny and she started laughing aloud. The female tree spirit looked and saw her. It ordered her to come down. It then swallowed her whole first but later it vomited her out and changed her into a gourd water bottle. It then disguised itself as the bride. Tlumtea at last came back and seeing the spirit dressed like his bride he said:

“Why, my love, you don’t look my bride.”

“You were away too long that I changed in the meanwhile.”

“Your nails are too long.”

“Sure, they were over worked by pointing in the direction you went.”

“And your eyes. They are no longer bright.”

“Over worked too. I looked and looked hoping to see you come.”

“All right, let’s resume our walk.”

He took the gourd water bottle and led the way. People heard that Tlumtea had brought back a very beautiful bride and they came out of their homes to see her. Seeing instead an ugly old woman they were disappointed and went back silently into their homes. Tlumtea was disappointed too. But he could do nothing. When he got back home, he started a farm of his own and spent most of his time working in his farm. The female tree spirit also went with him to the farm and while they were away, the gourd water bottle changed back into the beautiful woman again and cooked the food. When cooking was done, she changed back into the gourd water bottle again. Tlumtea found the food ready when he came home and thought that it was very strange. He decided to investigate. One day he came back and watched.

Tlumtea saw the gourd water bottle changed into a beautiful woman. As she was busy preparing to cook, he suddenly ran out of his hiding place and held her very tightly. She begged him to free her because she was very afraid of the female tree spirit. He replied that he could not allow her to become a gourd again. In stead he said that he wanted to know who was the impersonator and finally solved the long puzzle. He took her to bed and stayed there until the female spirit came back. It shouted:

“Open up. I will show that woman what she had to repay for going to bed with my husband.”

Tlumtea did not open the door. The female tree spirit broke it open. Only then he said:

“You two just settle this in a sword fight.”

He gave the female tree spirit a sword of wood and the

beautiful woman a sword of iron. When they fought the tree spirit was defeated and was cut up into three pieces. When thrown out of the window, the female tree spirit turned into wild plants of plantain. Tlumtea and Vanchungnula lived happily ever after.

32. MUALZAVATA

Mualzavata was a giant. His name meant he was the one who could fell all tree on one hundred hills in one day. His wife also had the name that meant that she was the one who could plant in all the cultivation plots on one hundred hills before the planting season was over.

One day Mualzavata complained that there were dust in his eyes and asked the villagers to help him clean them. They used poles to drag out baskets, tree branches as well as two stags from his eyes. Once Mualzavata alarmed the villagers by smoking a pipe. He produced so much smoke from his pipe that they thought there was fire and they came running to fight fire. They used to say that there were about one hundred monkeys climbing, pumping and running in his eyebrows. Two yak escaped into his beard and they were lost for ever.

One day Mualzavata fell asleep with one arm stretched out. It was laid across a river and the villagers used it as a bridge to cross from one side of the river to another. He had an itch on his back and he lifted his hand to scratch it and people using that hand as a bridge were thrown on a ridge on the further side of the river.

33. A HORN THAT WAS CURVED LIKE A SPIRAL

Once a princess was very pretty as well as very clever. As a debater, none could outspoke her. Her father the king said that he who won her in a debate would marry her and take half

of his country. Seven brothers from another country heard about it and they went to have a contest with her.

On the way they found a bag and the youngest brother picked it up and carried it along against the advice of his elders. Next they found a dead fowl. He picked it up again despite his brothers' objection. In this manner, he picked up a string, a spoon, a big rope and a goat horn that was curved like a spiral.

They went to the palace and declared that each of them wanted to have a debate with the clever princes. The defeated challenger would have his left ear pierced with a hot iron. The eldest went in first, the room had all the windows shut. He said:

"It is stuffy and hot here."

"An oven would be much hotter."

He had nothing to say in reply. He had his left ear pierced. The other five met the same fate. The youngest brother went in. he said:

"It is stuffy and hot here."

"An oven would be much hotter."

"I imagine I could bake my bird here" (He produced the dead fowl).

"I am afraid fat would fall out from your bird if it were heated."

"Don't bother, I have a spoon here to take care of the fat."

"Your spoon might get broken because of the hot fat."

"Never mind. I have here a string to bind the break."

"Your sentences are broken and short."

"Fix this rope to the ends of my sentences to lengthen them."

"So, you are crooked."

"Not as crooked as this spiral horn."

She could not say anything to his last remark and therefore she was defeated. The youngest brother married her and got half of the country from his father-in-law, the king.

34. AIHNIARA

Tihniara ran the swiftest among the best of runners. When he took hold of the goat horns in both of his left and right hand to turn, the goat's feet seldom touched the ground as he ran. One day he was with his friends in a field. His friends were thirsty and requested him to fetch water for them from a stream. He brought water back in a bamboo basket. The basket leaked but he came so quick that enough water was in it for his friends to quench their thirst.

Friends asked him a demonstration of his quickness and he jumped down from the window of his house and ran to the door to enter into the house again, and resumed his former place. His friends had the impression that he was flying with knees and heels seen close to his buttocks all the time.

35. WHITE EYELID MONKEY HAD A STUBBLE FOR ITS TAIL

A fox was in a hurry to get a lair where its mate the pregnant vixen could produce a litter. It found a tiger's lair and it brought its mate there. Soon many pups were born. The vixen was afraid that the tiger might return at any time and do them some harm. The fox laid itself down at the entrance to the lair and thought what it should do when the tiger appeared. Then it said to the mate:

"I will give you the signal when I see the tiger and you make the pups cry loud. I will then ask why they cry much and you answer that they went to have a tiger for their dinner."

Soon the tiger came. The signal was given. The pups cried. The fox asked why they made so much noise. The vixen said they cried for tiger's meat. The tiger heard all these and ran away.

One white eyelid monkey stopped the tiger.

“Why so frightened, tiger?”

“I am running away for my life.”

“What, who would do any harm to you?”

“Those who have occupied my liar at present.”

“Nonsense. I had seen them. They are a fox and a vixen having a litter of pups. Come with me and I will show you, I am right.”

In order to encourage the tiger to go with it, the monkey offered to have its tail tied to that of the tiger. With their tails tied together, they went to where the liar was. The fox which was still on guard saw them coming from a distance. It called out loud:

“Good monkey. Thank you for bringing the tiger to us. My children would not stop crying until they have had a tiger for their meal.”

Hearing this the tiger started to run back the way they came. The monkey fortunately escaped death because its tail broke and it was left behind. In this manner the white eyelid monkey had a stubble for a tail.

36. BUIZOVA

Buizova was the most wonderful songster that ever lived. His voice was very sweet while his appearance was ugly. Hearing only his voice, all young women loved him. All animals were charmed by his lovely voice and even tree leaves would glide softly down from the tree when he sang.

One day while he was on top of a tree, he sang and his voice attracted two young women. They came to the foot of the tree and requested him to come down for love making to both of them. He was ready to comply with their request but as soon as they saw him they ran for their lives.

37. RIMENHAWIHI

Zawlthlia had a wife who was the most beautiful woman called Rimenhawihhi. Her hair was exceptionally long. She wanted to have a look at her self very often and she went to the river several times in a day. One day at the river bank one of her hair got loose and without her knowledge was carried down stream by the river current. A big fish swallowed it and it was only one strand of hair, it filled the entire stomach of the fish. A fisherman caught the fish and when he cut open its belly, he found the wonderfully long hair.

He went to the king and presented that long hair to his majesty who guessed correctly that a beautiful woman must live somewhere up the fine stream. Without having seen the woman he fell in love with her. He sent his men to investigate. Searching on both sides of the river they slowly went up stream and came to a house built of metal. Rimenhawihhi shut all doors and remained inside because Zawlthlia was absent. The king's men knocked at the door to gain entrance to the house. But she did not allow them to come inside. They asked:

“Who are you?”

“An ordinary woman who eats only vegetables.”

They went back to report it to their king. He ordered:

“Go back and find her name.”

They appeared at her door again and asked for her name. She said it was Rimenhawihhi but it was too long to remember. They went back and they could remember only ‘men’ part. The king insisted that he must get the full name. They came again and this time they could give the full name of the woman to their king. Then the king ordered them to bring the woman. But she remained inside the house and refused to open the iron doors. Some men went up the roof and from there they dropped fruit. At first she ignored them. When they started dropping fruit of good taste and sweet smell she could no longer remain inside.



She came out to collect them and a man got a chance to take hold of her lovely hair. She would not allow any harm done to her hair and she opened the door to let the king's men come in. They prepared to take her away and she took a skein of thread to mark the way she went. Then she also told her pet animals to tell her husband when he came back to follow the track to get her back.

Zawlthilia came back home and the pets told him what had happened and what he should do to see her again. The dog said that the kidnappers went west and the way would be marked by a thread. He followed the thread and at night fall he caught the kidnappers asleep at a camp in the forest. He could easily kill all of them and rescued his wife. They lived happily ever after.

38. TLINGI AND NGAMA

Tlingi and Ngama were lovers and they often met as lovers did at some hidden places known only to them. One day they agreed to meet near a hillock which both knew. At that time their village was at war with another village and therefore no one should reveal his presence by making a noise when he or she was in the forest. As Tlingi reached the tryst she set quietly at a place where she could not be seen easily by anyone who passed by. Ngama came to the other side of the hillock and he too sat quietly and waited for the arrival of his lover. They sat and waited not knowing they were so near to each other all the time. They put a few twigs in the ground and from these grew groves of bamboo that were quite different from other bamboos. Each of them thought that she or he had to wait only for a few moments though it lasted days and months Tlingi died and she was buried and he visited the grave quite often.

One day Ngama found that the flower plants at Tlingi's grave were very much disturbed and so he himself went near the grave and watched. Early next morning a wild cat came to pick flowers. He caught it and it revealed the fact that Tlingi who was then a spirit sent this cat to get some flowers from this place where the remains of its former existence were buried. He went with the cat to meet Tlingi in the spiritual world. It was not an easy journey and finally he was able to complete it and both Tlingi and Ngama were happy to meet again. Ngama found that the house where Tlingi lived needed repair and they went into the forest to collect building materials. Trees which Tlingi thought to be big and good



were not so big or good in Ngama's eyes. They were too small that he could easily uproot them as if they were only grass. They went hunting and fishing together. Big bears of Tlingi were only worms to Ngama and Tlingi's big fish were only dry leaves to Ngama. Ngama reasoned that the difference in sight was due to the difference that one was a spiritual being while the other was a human being. Ngama returned to the abode of human beings and committed suicide. He became a spiritual being and went back to Tlingi and they found that there was no more difference

in their evaluation of things they saw. They lived together happily ever after.

39. THE CHIEF'S DAUGHTER AND A SNAKE

A python lived in a cave near a big village. Villagers naturally considered the snake as of the spiritual world because it was very big. In order to please it, they went to offer goats to this snake. Some parents offered their little babies. One day a traveler of Pawi clan stopped at the village for one night. He found that the villagers were not happy. No songs were heard from the bachelors common hall. No children were seen playing in the street. He soon felt that something bad had happened and he asked the cause. They told him that all children of the village were sacrificed to the big snake.

Only one pretty girl of a very sweet voice was left. She was the daughter of the chief and every one loved her. She would also be sacrificed soon. Like every body else, he was sad too. He thought of ways and means to save her. Armed with a sharp edged adze he went to the cave of the snake. He saw the size of the snake and he had some misgivings as to whether he could kill it or not. But he was determined to kill it. There was a hard fight and at last one hard stoke of his adze fell squarely on its head and it died. All the villagers were very happy at his success and he expected to marry the girl whom he had saved. The girl had no objection and the chief agreed. They were married and lived happily ever after.

40. WHY THE DOG DID NOT HAVE HORNS WHILE THE GOAT HAD

Present day animals do not look exactly like the former animals of the same species. For instance dogs had horns whereas goats did not have any. They lived close to human beings and they were friendly with each other. Goats had one advantage

over the dogs. As they did not have horns, they could reach the food easily.

One day the dogs suggested that the goats could take the horns from them. With the horns they would look more beautiful than before. The goats agreed to take over the horns. From the day that they had the horns, the goats could defend themselves much better than before. On the other hand the dogs looked more like hunters without spears. Soon they realized their mistake and went to the goats to get back their horns. But the goats refused to give them back. This is why the dog and goats are now enemies.

41. KAWRDUMBELA

Kawrdumbela was an ugly man. He used to set a trap to catch wild animals near the cultivation plot where he worked. Every day in the morning he went to see his traps. It was always empty. He was very much disappointed. The forest had many wild animals and other traps set by other people never failed to catch some animals. He went to watch his own trap in the night from some distance and he saw that some animals were caught in his trap though a bird called Vazuntei ate them.

He moved quickly and caught Vazuntei. The bird pleaded mercy to set her free. The man said that he would not free it unless it could do some service to him. The bird therefore said that it would go to the front part of the chief's house on three successive nights and cried a warning that if the chief did not marry his beautiful daughter to Kawrdumbela, the chief himself together with his subjects would be killed by their enemies. Kawrdumbela liked this idea and set the bird free.

According to the promise, the bird went to the front part of the chief's house and said the warning clearly. On the first night, the chief did not believe the warning. When the warning was repeated on three successive nights he believed it and told his daughter what she would say if she had to marry the

most ugly man just to save them from destruction. The daughter was very good and kindhearted. She knew that the lives of many people depended on her decision and she agreed to the marriage.

After their marriage, Kawrdumbela sent his wife to her father to borrow the fish net. She was happy to go back to her parent's home and she stayed there as long as possible. She did not like her husband at all. She returned with the net to him only when the elders told her repeatedly to do so.

Kawrdumbela went to the river and cast the net. He caught a fish called Nghangiai. It requested to set it free by saying that if it were free it could give him one good advice. When asked what was the advice, the fish said that he must take a good bath in the river and rub himself well with very smooth stones. He found that this dark complexion was gone and he became a handsome man of fair complexion. He went home and his wife did not recognise him. She said:

“Miserable me! A most handsome man is here and he would soon be followed by the most ugly man.”

“Woman, know you that I am indeed your husband Kawrdumbela. Take this net and return it to your father.”

She was very much surprised. How was it possible that, suddenly she had become so fortunate as to have such a fine man for a husband? She should not stay long at her parent's home. She threw the net into the house and said; “Here, take back your thing,” and she hastily went away. Her father was suspicious. He followed her and found that her husband was now a totally changed man. He demanded what made him so handsome. When explained, the chief went to fish with his net and he caught a fish called Nghahrah. In the bargain to set it free the fish told him to rub his body with rough pebble. He did so and he became very ugly. But he blamed Kawrdumbela for his ugliness.

42. THE TIGER AND THE FROG

The tiger thought that of all animals it was the strongest and the swiftest. One day it met a frog and it could not refrain itself from asserting the fact that it was the most supreme among all animals. The frog disagreed to that statement of the tiger. Because the frog said that it was better than the tiger. When asked to run a race, the frog accepted the challenge. As soon as it was signaled to start the race, the frog jumped on to the back of the tiger which did not know it or suspect it. The tiger ran almost to the point of collapse and when it approached the goal, the frog jumped from its back and reached the goal first. The tiger said:

“It’s the first time that I have ever experienced a defeat. Let’s have another contest.”

“Stone throwing.”

“All right, you begin it.”

The tiger took a stone and threw it out with such force that all onlookers were amazed to see the stone going out very very far. The frog tried his ability next. It took up a stone and threw it at a dove’s nest. The dove was frightened and it flew out of its nest with such swiftness that no one recognised it as a bird. They all thought that the stone went up into the air through the nest and it went up and up until it went out of sight and every body present at the contest decided that the frog won. The tiger was much humiliated and the frog was given more respect than before by all other animals.

43. RAHTEA

Rahtea’s stepmother was very cruel to him. She forced him to do the hardest work of the home and gave him the smallest amount of food possible.



He was also dressed in rags. In addition to this the woman gave him no time for a good rest. In spite of that she planned to kill him. One day she was crying as if she had a great pain in her stomach. Her husband offered fowls and pigs to the angry spirits to appease them though she continued howling with a pain of her own imagination. She said:

“Animal sacrifice won’t do.”

“Then what shall I do?”

“Human sacrifice, Cut Rahtea’s throat and let his blood flow on the alter.”

Rahtea heard what his father and stepmother were talking. He fled into the forest. His stepmother sent his brother to bring him back with a promise to celebrate the most enjoyable festival

of Khuangchawi in honour of his coming back. His brother found him sitting under a Thingsiri tree which had flowers with full of sweet juice. He said in verse:

“Come back with me, Rahtea,
The Khuangchawi shall be celebrated in your honour.”

Rahtea replied in verse too:

“Go back without me, brother dear,
I now have as food the good Thingsiri flower.
Only now that I can eat all I want,
And happy with a full stomach.”

The stepmother sent his aunt to bring him back home. She failed too. At last the stepmother herself came and persuaded him to come back. He replied that there was no love lost between the two of them and suddenly the boy turned into a dragon fly and flew away.

44. SIBUTA AND DARI

Chief Darpida led his villagers in an attack against another village. He won and he brought back prisoners of war. One child thus brought was called Sibuta and the chief made him a slave at his own home. He had a daughter called Darlalpuui and that daughter used to bully the boy. Once she even stabbed him with her big brass hairpin and he thought death would be much better. Once he even tried to soften his tormenter by saying that she could have the same fate like him. Some time later the two villagers came to an agreement to keep peace and slaves were freed.

Sibuta was young, strong and industrious. He selected a site for cultivation and worked it in earnest. Soon he became prosperous. People came to live near him and made him their chief. In the meanwhile Darpida died and his widow and his

daughter became pauper. The chief left no son and people from other village came and robbed them. The widow thought of seeking refuge at Sibuta's village. She hoped to get his help because he was once their slave. That gave Sibuta a chance to get his revenge on the woman who once treated him very badly.

When the time of festival came, the villagers prepared a sacrifice of oxen too. Their chief said that the woman Darlalpuii would also be one of the victims of the sacrifice. For one whole day, the nine oxen and Darlalpuii were driven non-stop from the village to the foot of the hill and from the foot of the hill to the village. Everyone except Sibuta was sorry for the woman victim. As for Sibuta, he even refused permission to Darlalpuii's mother to give her water to drink. In the evening, all the animals and Darlalpuii were killed.



45. SAWNGKHARA USED CHARMS TO GET A BEAUTIFUL WIFE

Chawngvungi was a very beautiful woman who had many suitors. Among her admirers was Sawngkhara, son of chief of Chawngtleng who was the proud owner of the Liandova gong. He was very ugly and Chawngvungi paid no interest in him. Because of the unrequited love he suffered greatly. His father was afraid that he would die. He called the elders and asked for their advice. A love potion was produced and instructions were given as to how to use it.

Sawngkhara visited Chawngvungi's home again, and when no one was looking he smeared the love potion on the handle of a broom that Chawngvungi used often to sweep with. He left without saying a word. Chawngvungi used it to sweep and she began to love Sawngkhara. Her parents used all kinds of antidotes to cure her mislaid affection but they failed. Sawngkhara appeared again with terms of marriage. Among the bride-price, the Liandova gong was to be included. It was taken as symbol of good luck to the chief's family and the chief gave it with great reluctance.

Leaving her family in order to live with the family of her husband, Chawngvungi told her mother to observe a certain branch of a big banyan tree near their home. If leaves of it withered, she would be sick. If the branch broke, she would be dead. She lived with her parent-in-laws and after giving birth to a son she died. Her mother noticed that the branch had broken and knew that her daughter had died. She went to steal the dead body and succeeded in doing it. Sawngkhara mourned for three full years and did not take another wife even after that. Their son Lianchema grew into a handsome man.

46. PI HMUAKI IS REMEMBERED FOR HER SONGS

The best singer with the sweetest voice was Pi Hmuaki. As a young girl, she went to old people and listened to all the tales they told. There were tales of adventure, tales of love and tales of mystery of wonder. While other children played, she listened the tales. Because she was poetic at heart, the tales were turned into poetry by herself. She grew into a very beautiful woman who sang the most beautiful songs and all her songs were quite popular.

The chief of her village was stupid. He became jealous of her popularity and the only thing he could think of to undo her fame was to kill her. He told his followers, who were also stupid, to dig a grave and bury her alive together with her gong. When the men came to seize her, she knew that she would not escape this fate. She started singing and she died singing. When a person was emotionally moved to sing, he thought that it was Pi Hmuaki in his heart who exerted herself to express her love and kindness.

47. VAICHHUKA AND THE STRONG MAN

Vaichhuka was a very strong man. In fact he was the strongest man but he wanted proof that he was the strongest among all. He had therefore visited many distant lands and met all the strong men in contests. Only when he had won all such contests that he could really be called the strongest.

The first strong man Vaichhuka met was called Carrier because he could carry the most heavy load.

“Friend, the load you could carry is amazing. You must be very strong.”

“Not so strong as Vaichhuka, I suppose.”

“I’m Vaichhuka himself.”

“Glad to meet you. Let’s wrestle to establish the title.”

They wrestled hard and Vaichhuka finally won.

“I shall accompany you in your journey.”

“You are most welcome.”

Next man Vaichhuka met was called Sand-fly sawbones. He could dissect the flies.

“You are most clever to have the ability to dissect the flies.”

“May be or may not be. Possibly Vaichhuka is better.”

“I’m Vaichhuka.”

“Glad to meet you. Let’s wrestle to establish the title.”

Both wrestled hard and Vaichhuka finally won.

“I shall accompany you in your journey.”

“You are most welcome.”

Next man Vaichhuka met was called Long Roller. He could move big logs with ease.

“It’s amazing to see you roll these logs. For what purpose are you doing this?”

“Practicing to meet Vaichhuka who is said to be going about to see all strong men.”

“I’m Vaichhuka.”

“Glad to meet you. Let’s wrestle to establish the title.”

Both wrestled hard and Vaichhuka finally won.

“I shall accompany you in your journey”

“You are most welcome.”

Next man Vaichhuka met was called Suction. He had the capacity to suck up a vast amount of water.

“It’s no small wonder to see what you have done.”

“It’s not settled yet – who is better, between Vaichhuka and me?”

“I’m Vaichhuka.”

“Glad to meet you. Let’s wrestle to establish the title.”

Both wrestled hard and Vaichhuka finally won.

“I shall accompany in your journey.”

“You are not welcome.”

Now the five of them went on and came to a river. They wanted to eat fish. Suction took care emptying the river water so that fish could be picked up with ease. They needed fire and Carrier went in search of it. He came across a wicked female spirit who was sitting by a big fire. When asked a piece of log with fire, she replied:

“You have come here to ask fire, But get inside the pot and be my prisoner.”

As Carrier failed to return in time, his friends Sand-fly Sawbones, Log Roller and Suction came to investigate. Each of them became a prisoner in a separate pot. At last Vaichhuka came and he was quicker than the wicked female spirit. As she said “You come to ask fire,” he gave her a blow that nearly killed her. She asked for mercy and picking up a dry leaf, dipped it into water and waved over the pots whereby the prisoners escaped and were restored to normal size. Then they took a flaming brand from the spirit’s fire and went back to the river bank to take and eat fish in plenty.

They continued the journey and came to a lake in which there was an island where seven gnomes lived. They decided to destroy these gnomes. Sand-fly Sawbones swam out to the island and was killed. Long Roller was killed. Carrier was also killed. Suction was killed too. With his iron staff, Vaichhuka swam out to island and the most fearful battle ensued. All the gnomes surrendered and acknowledged defeat. Remembering what the wicked female spirit had done before, Vaichhuka took a dry leaf, wet it and waved above his dead companions and they all came to life again.

Next they defeated the gnomes that lived in a tree hollow. Then they went to villages where a tiger, an elephant and a bear came daily at one village to eat one human being which each received as tribute. When they came to the village where the

bear exacted its tribute, they found that it was a beautiful woman's turn to be eaten next. Vaichhuka took her as his wife and promised to kill the bear. And indeed, the bear was killed and its body broken into pieces. After that they went to the village where the tiger was taking tribute. Vaichhuka smashed the tiger's head into several fragments. After that they went to the village where the elephant was taking tribute. Vaichhuka had the elephant torn to pieces and all the villagers shared its flesh to be eaten.

Now that Vaichhuka's championship title was finally established, all the companions bade farewell to each other and went their own separate ways.

48. KUNGAWRHI AND THE GOBLINS

While splitting bamboo into thin strips to make baskets, a man hurt his thumb. From that cut a girl came out. She was called Kungawrhi. She was so small that one grain of millet was one meal for her. Months went by and she grew into an ordinary woman of considerable beauty. Many men came to seek her hand for marriage and among them there was a tiger-man who succeeded at last to get her. One old woman who was in the forest, collecting fire wood came to report that as the bride and bridegroom left the village, he turned into a tiger and carried his woman on its back. Her father got alarmed. Her daughter must be rescued from the tiger-man. In order to get the help of young men he gave a feast to them and told them to try and bring back his daughter to him.

Two poor young men called Phawthira and Hrangchala went after Kungawrhi. When they came to the house where she lived, they found her husband was absent. They told her about their mission and she hid them on a shelf. When her husband, the tiger-man came, he was drunk.

"Ha! I smell men. That would be a delicious meal for me."

"You smell right, husband, I am a human being."

"It is a smell similar to that of you, but I think it's different."

But he was too drunk to investigate and he soon fell into deep sleep. Before dawn Kungawrhi took the two men into the forest and hid them there. When her husband woke up he said he would go on a journey for seven days. He went out and came back next day. He told her again that he would be absent for another six days but he was actually absent for only two days. Then he said five but was away for three. Then he said four and he was away exactly for four days. Then he said three but was away for five. Then he said two but was away for six. Then he said one and she knew that he would be away for seven days and that would be sufficient for them to run away and got to safety on the seventh day.

So the two young men and Kungawrhi fled away. She had with her some grass seeds. The tiger-man came back and found a pot with fermented drink, he drank and enjoyed it. After having drunk it, he came to notice that his wife was absent. He climbed a tall tree and looked around. He saw a light reflected from the wristlets of his wife and he chased in that direction. He was so quick that he would soon come upon the escaping party. Then the party was warned by a spiritual being to cast the grass seeds that the woman brought. When thrown out, grass grew with such suddenness and thickness that the tiger-man had great difficulty to pass through the forest of grass. The tiger-man, however, came close to them again.

The same voice told the woman to cast the water seeds. A sea was created between the pursuer and the pursued. Nevertheless the tiger-man came close again and the same voice told the woman to cast the fire seed. A fire was created and caused much delay to the progress of the tiger while the fugitives reached a house where they could remain safe for the night. The tiger-man went round and round the house and it gave chance to Hrangchala to take his bow and arrow and aim well. He succeeded in killing the tiger-man.

Kungawrhi and her two friends passed another night in the forest. In the middle of the night Hrangchala stood guard when others slept. Goblins came. They said:

“Tresspassers, you shall die.”

“Recently we killed a tiger, now could you dare?”

They retreated without another argument. Next guard duty fell on Phawthira. Goblins came again. They said as before:

“Tresspassers, you shall die.”

Phawthira was greatly shaken and with a chatter of teeth he replied:

“Recently we killed a tiger, now would you dare?”

The goblins knew him to be a coward. The fire was also dying out and goblins rushed in and took Kungawrhi away. As she went she dropped a thread all along the path they took her and so the two companions could follow her next morning. From an opening in the ground, they went to the village of the goblins. Hrangchala shouted to the goblins to surrender Kungawrhi or he would destroy their village. When they ignored him, he dropped one of his heavy brass hair pin on their village and caused a portion of it to be destroyed. Many goblins were killed. Still they did not produce Kungawrhi, Hrangchala next dropped his comb and another part of their village was destroyed together with a heavy casualty to the goblin population.

They shouted that they would send Kungawrhi but in reality they only sent a goblin girl of as beautiful as Kungawrhi. Hrangchala pushed her aside and went into their village to find out Kungawrhi by himself. He found her bound and covered. He freed her and the three resumed their journey. They met many more adventures but at last they reached the house of Kungawrhi's father. Hrangchala and Kungawrhi were married and their children and their grand children never got tired of listening to their tales of adventure.

49. RUNGINU AND THIALTEA

Once Thialtea said that he had found a tree full of delicious fruits in the forest and he invited Runginu to come with him. When Runginu told that she could not climb a tree, he said, “He

would climb the tree and share the fruits with her. So she went with him. When they reached the fruit tree, Thialtea climbed and ate the fruits that nearer to him. He just ignored Runginu. She told him not to forget his promise but he turned a deaf ear to her. She wept. A stag came by and asked her what was the cause of her sorrow. She explained and the stag told her to reproach the man severely and if he attacked her for her strong words, it would help her against that man. Taking courage she said:

Thialtea, you horrible creature, a dirty inveterate liar.
I wish you get a grievous injury,
And die a death of infamy.

Thialtea came down from the tree. The stag fled. Runginu was beaten. Then Thialtea went up the tree and resumed his eating without giving Runginu anything. She cried again and a bear came. It advised her to curse the man soundly. She did; he came down; the bear fled; and she was beaten. More animals came and she was invariable beaten. At last a tiger came. The process was repeated. But this time the tiger killed Thialtea.

50. CHALA AND THANGI

There were two lovers named Chala and Thangi lived in a village called Khaunglung. From the childhood they grew up together and wanted to get married soon. One day Chins came to attack their village. Chala escaped but Thangi was taken prisoner. He thought life was not worth living without the woman he loved. He secretly followed where she was taken. As a slave she had to work in the cultivation field. One day she softly sang:

*Chala, a great distance is between us.
But do you still cherish the memory of our love?*

Chala was at that moment hiding at some distance so that her owners might not see him. He replied softly:

*Have no doubt about that, my dear
I'm still very much your lover.*

She quickly left the cultivation field and joined him. They fled. They came to a big river which was in spate. With Thangi holding his shoulders, Chala led the way in crossing it. In the middle of the stream Thangi slipped and was carried away in the turbulent current. She was lost to him forever.

*Adieu, my beloved, it's final departure,
Nothing that I could do would bring us together.*

51. DUHMANGA AND DARDINI

Duhmanga, the chief's son loved Dardini, the widow's daughter and it was going to be disagreeable match to the chief and his wife. Against their wishes, he married her. One day while Duhmanga was on a hunting expedition that would take quite a few days, his parents told her that she was divorced from their son and that she must go back to her mother. In sadness she sang:

*My Duhmanga is very brave,
Who could now give him justice sweet and yam tender.*

Duhmanga came back and remarried her.

When Duhmanga went away for another expedition, Dardini was sent away again and another chief's daughter was brought at home to be married to Duhmanga as soon as he came back. But Duhmanga was firm. He sent away the woman and brought back his beloved Dardini. On the third time that Duhmanga was away and Dardini was driven out, Dardini's mother married her to a man of another village and thus she was taken away.

Duhmanga came back and found that he did not have any chance to get back his beloved Dardini. He was sad and helpless. He became restless and did nothing but sit in utter dejection. Days and months passed. At last he decided that he must go and meet Dardini at any cost. So he went to the village where Dardini

lived with her husband only to kill himself and be buried. All that the people could do was to bury him in the grave.

52. SAZALTEPA AND BAKVAWMTEPU

Once all animals agreed to build a highway through the forest and to keep it clean. Death would be the penalty if somebody tries to dirty it. One day Sazaltepa was walking along that road when he met a cat. Desiring to eat the cat he dirtied the road himself and accused the cat for that. So the cat was eaten. But other animals found out that he was the real culprit and he fled to escape punishment.

Bakvawmtepu was somewhat kindhearted and simple. Sazaltepa went to him and requested protection. He was given the task of baby-sitting. A few days later he ate the young baby he was given to look after and fled. He succeeded in evading Bakvawmtepu for quite a long time. At last Bakvawmtepu made a rat hole near his hiding place. When he saw the rat hole he started digging to catch the rat. While he was engaged like this, Bakvawmtepu came from behind and killed him.

53. NGAITEI SAVED HER NATIVE VILLAGE

A young orphan called Ngaitei had to live with her grandmother who used to take her to the forest to collect yam. Her father was drowned in a lake where they looked for yam and as she was thirsty she went to the lake. She did not know what made her to shout “Ho” but as soon as she had said that her father, the ghost appeared and took her away. Soon her grandmother knew that she was lost. She went out in search of her. On seeing a red deer she asked:

“Could you tell me where Ngaitei is?”

“Sure, Granny, she is now at her father’s place.”

She went on and met partridge and told her to go to the place where the ghost of Ngaitei’s father lived. At last she got there. Ngaitei’s father at first was reluctant to return the girl. The old woman therefore had to promise to send back the girl to him soon. But the given promise was not to be kept.

The ghost became angry and caused a great flood. Threatening even to drown the village where Ngaitei lived. People got alarmed and threw her cloth in the flood. The flood subsided a little. Then it swelled again. People got alarmed and threw her comb. The flood subsided a little. Then it swelled again. People got alarmed and threw little Ngaitei herself into the flood and it subsided forever. People were sad and they had a song in her remembrance:

Dear Ngaitei, we have you to offer,
To appease the flood’s anger.
You are now with your father deer.
And that would make both of you happy, we are sure.
But Ngaitei, we still miss you much,
And we want you to know as such.

54. UGLY CHEPAHAKHATA BECAME THE SPOKESMAN OF THE MIZO

A man called Chephakhata was very ugly that no woman wanted to marry him. But one day a woman agreed to live with him because she too had no man to marry her as she was a powerful witch and she was not beautiful. She used her magic to get a grandhouse surrounded by little houses of slaves. In that community she made her husband Chephakhata as the chief. Soon they were blessed with one daughter.

As the years passed Chephakhata forgot that all the wealth and power he enjoyed were due to the witch he married. He

neglected her. She told her daughter who was at that time in her teens, to go and fetch his father who was enjoying intoxicated drinks. She appeared with the summon but he ignored her. She went away and came back for how many times, he did not know. At last she announced that her mother and herself were leaving him and he would be reverted to his former poor life again. He gave a nod and continued his drinking until he fell asleep for a long long time.

When he woke up he found himself on the ground and his wife, daughter and all grand things were gone. Was it a dream? No, it was very real and he had to beg for his food. But who would pity him except his daughter. Because of her pleading her mother sent him a magic pot which would supply cooked rice without limit. Soon a chief heard that Chepahakhata had a mysterious pot and he was jealous. He caused it to be broken to pieces. Chepahakhata became very sad. He went out into the forest and sat in dejection under a big tree. He heard many birds talking but he was interested in the talk of two particular birds:

“Who are more cleaver of the two, Mizo and the Vai (Plain People)?”

“The Vai, of course,”

“Why?”

“When two woman of identical looks and dresses are brought to the Mizo they would not know which is mother and which is daughter.”

“A Mizo would know, dear friend. If he gave a sound beating, one was bound to say, “Don’t do it to my daughter”, another was bound to say, “Don’t do it to my mother” and so the secret would be out.”

“Well, a cow with both ends looking very much alike”

“A Mizo would give it a beating too. When it runs away. Is any more difficult to know the head or tail?”

“Now, a basket that was top as bottom alike.”

“Easy, A Mizo would turn it over and the top would fall off.”

Chepahakhata remembered his conversation and decided to make good use of it. He also learnt that the Mizos and Vai would meet in a contest of intelligence soon. He went to the contest. He was amazed at the coincidence that the first puzzle that the Vai put to the Mizo was the identical women. The Mizo could not think of any answer and Chepahakhata came forward to provide an answer. When he beat one woman, another shouted, “Don’t do it to my daughter” and everyone present knew who the mother was.

Next a cow with front and rear parts looking the same was brought in. All the Mizo talked him to solve that problem too. He gave it a good beating and it ran away showing everybody its head. The basket problem came lastly alone and he was requested to solve it. He turned it over and the top fell off. Everyone was pleased with his service, to the Mizo. His wife knew all about it with her power of a witch and with her daughter, she came back to Chepahakhata and his former rich style of living was restored.

55. GIFTS FROM THE BROTHER-IN-LAW

On his sister’s marriage, a man received a bamboo stick as a present from his brother-in-law. If it were used to stir an empty pot, the pot would be filled with cooked rice. On his way back to his home he had to stop for the night at an old woman’s home. He put the stick on a shelf and said:

“Old woman, I am sure you don’t put this stick in any of your cooking pots. It’s dirty.”

“Don’t bother, It’s safe where you put it.”

He had to go out into the village on some business. While he was absent, the inquisitive old woman put the stick in one

of her pots and the empty pot suddenly became full of rice. She took the stick and put another similar stick on the shelf. Without suspecting the change, the man took the useless stick next day and went home. When he found that the stick worked no miracle as promised, he went back to his brother-in-law. He received a she-goat which enacted beads of amber from its anus when it was kicked on the rump. He brought it back and as usual he stopped for the night at the old woman's home. He had to go out the village on some business and he said to her:

“Old woman, I warn you not to go near this goat and kick at its rump. It has bad temper and I am afraid of it that would harm you.”

As soon as he left, she kicked on the rump and was very much pleased to get beads of amber that fell out of the anus of the goat. She had a similar looking goat in her yard and she had changed them. Without suspecting anything, he took the goat home next day. When he kicked on the rump of the goat only produced a loud cry, he went back to his brother-in-law. He received this time a millet and a cane. When the names Ram and Ramdia were spoken softly these things would help him against all enemies but he was warned that on no account were these names uttered loudly or harshly. With Ram and Ramdia he came for the third time to the old woman's home. He put them near a stock of firewood and just before he left for the village he said to her:

“Old woman, these things have their own names – Ram and Ramdia. Never call the names loudly. Please be careful.”

“I'm not of the meddlesome type. Go your own way.”

Long before he left, she shouted “Ram and Ramdia” and the millet and the cane started hammering and beating her. She screamed and ran away but these things followed her wherever she went and continued to punish her until she died.

56. ORIGIN OF THE TUAICHAWNG RIVER

The little sister Nuengi was somewhat a spoilt child because her elder sister Tuaichawngi always tried to please her at any cost. One day they were walking on a ridge of water divide where the rivers have their sources. It was a very hot day. Suddenly Nuengi demanded:

“Water! Water! I shall die of thirst.”

“Dear child, wait until we get to a village over there.”

“I can’t wait till then.”

“Look dear. I can change myself into a river and you can have your fill of water. Remember I shall then be lost to you for ever.”

“Remember without water, I shall die and you being human or river is nothing to me.”

“Drink water and be satisfied. Good bye.”

So saying big sister Tuaichawngi became the Tuaichawng river and flowed down to the land of Bengal. The king of that land was much surprised to see a big man to find out where it started or how it started. When they came to the source they found Nuengi, a frightened child. They took her back to their king who took her as a member of his harem.

Some years later she blessed with a son. The chief Queen who had no child, was afraid that Nuengi would become the king’s favourite. She let one of her servants to take the baby and throw it on the river. Tuichawngi still remembered her young sister very well and knew that the boy now discarded in the river was her son. The boy was saved and brought up into manhood. Six more sons were discarded in the river and they were all saved and brought up together. Tuaichawngi then told them that they were the sons of the king and they were sent to dance on the palace roof. The king heard the commotion on the roof and on

investigation he knew that they were his seven sons of Nuengi. As a result the chief Queen was executed and Nuengi was made as the chief Queen.

57. TUALVUNGI AND ZAWLPALA

Tualvungi was an extremely beautiful woman. Her husband Zawlpala was proud of her. Both were very happy together. One day Phuntiha, a very rich and powerful king visited their village. When he saw the beautiful woman he asked Zawlpala who she was. It was understood that he would take her as concubine if she were not married. Powerful and unscrupulous as he was, it was not unlikely that she would be made free by killing her husband if she were married. Zawlpala thought it wise to say that she was free and she was his sister. Then the king told him to name what and how much of property he wanted to give her away in marriage.

Zawlpala thought that too high a price would discourage him to press on the marriage. The price was:

1. Jewelry put in two baskets in two attached to a pole and carried by a man must have a weight of bringing the pole almost to a breaking point.
2. Guns when displayed must cover the middle wall.
3. Yak when herded together must fill the whole enclosure of a house.
4. A brass bell as high as the roof of a house.
5. All kinds of clothes in one hundred trunks.

Zawlpala failed to put into consideration that king Phuntiha was also a master of magic. He had all the demands fulfilled instantly. Zawlpala admitted that the woman was infact his wife and the gifts he asked were too much that he believed no one could give them. The king was angry. He insisted that Zawlpala could not take back his own words. He freed her and the gifts he asked were given so that the woman would be his. He took her away.

Tualvungi told her former husband to be careful because one day the king might try to kill him.



A few days later Zawlpala went to visit the king's palace. The king received him with open arms. A grand feast was given in his honour. He forgot Tualvungi's warning and he drank the poisoned fermented drinks. As soon as he got back home, he died. The villagers wanted to send a message to Tualvungi of her former husband's death. They decided that an animal messenger would be best. At first they chose a crab. It said, "Yes, yes", But

they thought it would not be able to deliver the message well and they kicked it aside. It was why the crab would move only sideways. Next they chose the crow. Later they considered it not good enough and drove it away by throwing dirty water, etc. at it. So the crow became black. Finally, they chose a quail which coved, "Tualvungi from the palace, come to Zawlpala's grave." It went and found Tualvungi alone weaving at the top part of her apartment. She got the message all right.



When she asked permission to go back to her native village, the king told her to wait. Sometime later he put a sharp blade against the door step and shouted the news to Tualvungi that a

cow had given birth to a foal. With excitement she ran out and got herself hurt by the sharp blade at the door. With that wound she would not travel. So the king thought and went out hunting. Tualvungi bound her wound well with bandage, collected her property as much as she could carry and left for her village. Children at the village told her that Zawlpala's grave had yak heads and flowering plants. She went straight to that grave and there she found an old woman. She bribed that old woman with the property she brought to kill her.

After many entreaties, she killed her. So she became a very beautiful butterfly and that butterfly was immediately joined by an equally beautiful butterfly which was in fact Zawlpala. The king followed Tualvungi to the grave and having learnt that she had died, he killed himself. He too became a butterfly but that butterfly was big and ugly and it flew awkwardly. When you see two beautiful butterflies flying happily followed by an ugly one, there you see Tualvungi and Zawlpala followed by Phuntiha.

58. LALRUANGA THE MAGICIAN

Zuahranga had three children. One was Lalruanga. When he was in his mother's womb, he stayed there for three years. As soon as he was born, he chased and captured a three month old pig that was running beneath their house. Zauhranga was also a remarkable man who had the ability to overrun the spirit of a dead man and capture it before it reached the country of the dead. By capturing the departing spirit, he restored several people to life.

One day Zauhranga was drinking the fermented drink at a friend's home when he was informed that his eldest son was about to die. Believing his prowess to out run any departing spirit, he went on drinking and went home without any hurry. When he got home his son was already dead. He chased the spirit with all his might and overtook it only when it was about to enter the place of the dead. The spirit said:

“Don’t bother, father. Although I left you for the country of the dead, you shall have one good son soon.”

He came back and found that his wife had given birth to Lalruanga. As soon as he was born he started telling the weather forecast. Even when he was in his mother’s womb, he often told her to carry the water bottle because there would be no rain on that particular day that the mother left home to work in the field or to carry the broad hat to cover her when it rained and the mother was always in trouble when she did not pay heed to the words of advice given by her unborn son.

Then Lalruanga was five years old, he went to the forest to trap wild animals. But somebody was at the trap before he got there and had taken the animals caught. He hid near the trap and found that it was an old spiritual being that was doing the mischief. He seized the old spirit which prayed to set it free in exchange of three powers. The first was the power to put a great quantity of meat into one small bag. Another power was to put a vast amount of water in a little gourd water bottle. The last power was to roll a large number of banana leaves in a bundle that could be worn as an ear ornament. He liked all these powers and taking them from the old spirit, he set it free. In fact he became a magician who could do many amazing things. Then using the bag, he carried all the venison he got. Using the gourd bottle he carried a vast store of water from the river. Then he rolled up many banana leaves and put them in a hole in his ear. When he got home, his mother said that he should bring back something from the forest. He replied:

“You would not know what and how much I brought. Here take this bag.”

The bag looked small but it was so heavy that the mother could not carry it. They set it down and took out the venison from the bag. The whole house was covered with the deer-flesh.

“Son, I want to wash them and pack them into bundles.”

“The water from this little bottle and the leaves from the packet that has been used as an ear ornament could supply you all the water and leaves that you need.”

He was right. All the flesh were washed and packed and there still were more water and many more leaves left.

One day Lalruanga went north and met a man-tiger called Keichala. They became good friends. Lalruanga followed his friends to his place. Other man-tiger said that they smelled human and they wanted to eat that human. Keichala saved him. When Lalruanga asked Keichala to be presented to his parents, he replied that they were not worth seeing. But he insisted that he must pay his respect to the elders of a house which he visited. He was shown two old and angry tigers crouching at one corner of the room. He went and stroked them with his hand and all the mange of their bodies were gone. They were quite pleased with his behaviour. When he was told to rest he feigned sleep and he heard them talking like this:

“Son, your friend is a very good man. He is kind and gentle. He therefore deserves the best of treatment. Give him good food and good fermented drink and make sure that he is safe while he is here. On his return, give him as a parting gift the fruit that has precious ornaments in it.”

He heard the instructions and later he asked the old tigress what was the fruit of ornaments. He was told that this was a tree which bore fig fruits and when the fruits were opened, jeweled ornaments came out. As an additional information he was also told that only the southern branch of that tree bore fruits with very valuable and beautiful ornaments. He went and climbed that tree to select the best fruit he could find. But a branch of the tree cracked and the noise brought Keichala who said:

“We only tolerate man with good intentions.”

“I’m sorry, it was only an accident that this branch cracked.”

At the time of his departure, Keichala and his parents gave him one big fruit as a parting gift. Many man-tigers came and asked a game of wrestle with Lalruanga just for the sake of friendship and fun. But their intention was to kill and eat him.

So Keichala told him to leave secretly and to take a bottle of compressed air. He was to open the bottle and release the air in it only when he had got safely at home. Meanwhile, Keichala told the man-tigers to wait because Lalruanga was either having a bath or having his clothes change or having his hair dressed, etc. So that he could have time to reach home safely. Lalruanga on the other hand did not follow instructions well.

Before he got home he opened the bottle of air. The released air got back to Keichala and he took it as a sign that his friend had reach his home safely and he told the man-tigers that his friend had already gone home. They raced down the forest to catch Lalruanga. Keichala also felt that he must make sure whether his friend reached his home or not. He therefore ran much quicker than all other man-tigers in the way his friend had taken and found Lalruanga still at some distance before reaching home. He was told to get inside a hole and hide. As the hole was small some part of his feet remained outside and Keichala covered them. When other man-tigers arrived, Keichala informed them that Lalruanga was a very good magician. They wanted to test this statement and demanded that the magician should cause a rainfall with rain drops as big as the fruits of auborgine. When there was rain with big rain drops, they were frightened and left.

At home Lalruanga found that his daughter had already reached her puberty. He gave her fruit of ornaments and she took much delight in using them. Lalruanga's sister was jealous. She was determined to visit the place of man-tigers to get another fruit of jeweled ornaments. As she was not a magician like Lalruanga, she was eaten up by the man-tigers. When Lalruanga arrived to save her, she was already gone. But he summoned all man-tigers which had swallowed some parts of his sister and made them vomit those pieces. When the pieces set together, the sister was restored. One man-tiger which had swallowed the upper part of one of the arms was absent. A rat's flesh was put in place of that blank. When the sister

regained her life, she did not remember that she was eaten by the man-tigers and she took off the rat's flesh at one of her arms and she fell down dead again.



Lalruanga and Keichala promised each other that a decent burial would be given to the friend who died first by the friend who survived him. Each one was rather misguided by this promise because they tried to kill one another in order to get for himself

the chance to give his best friend a decent burial. One day while Lalruanga was working in the cultivation plot Keichala came as silently as possible to kill him. But Lalruanga noticed it and went inside his hut and made many noises to give the impression that he was entertaining many guests. Keichala was deceived and when it turned back Lalruanga shot an arrow that killed it.

To give his dead friend a decent burial, Lalruanga needed a yak horn which had one extra growth on it. Another magician called Hrangsaipuia had such a horn and he had to call that man's home to get it. He went into that house without being announced but the children saw him and their father was alerted of the presence of a stranger in the house. The host was also a clever magician and he tried to kill the guest with his magic. He appeared with a pot of fermented drink but there was a cobra on its cover. Lalruanga took off his turban and threw it up. It changed into an eagle and it ate up the snake. The two men then started to consume the drink and observed each other very closely. In the mean while the meal was prepared and there was no doubt that it was harmful to eat it. In order to divert the host's attention, the guest threw seeds near the fire place and the seed grew into plants that quickly bore fruits that got ripened very fast. The host did not take much interest in this event.

Next, the guest found two dead rats at the corner of the room. They were brought near the fireplace and their lives were restored. They sprang up and fought each other. Still the host was watchful and took no interest in the rats. Next the guest with his magic made the piglet underneath their floor on the ground squeak as if they had met some sort of danger and the host momentarily forgot him and looked through a hole in the floor to see what had happened. Lalruanga took advantage of this one unguarded moment and changed the food cup meant for him with that of the cup meant for the host.

When they set down to eat the host ate the food which was cursed by himself. After the meal the host set the yaks free so that they would gore the guest to death. Instead of the guest, the

yaks attacked the host and killed him. Then Lalruanga looked for a yak with one extra growth on its horn. He found it and brought it back to his home. He killed it and gave a feast in honour of his dead friend Keichala. He also brought back home the sister of Hrangsaipuia and made her his second wife.

59. HLAWNDAWHTHANGA

Laizahreliana had three sons of whom Hlawndawhthanga was the eldest. The middle one was Laicherhnawna and the youngest was Zahranga. There was one daughter called Ngunchiangi who was very beautiful and who sang song very sweetly. The brothers were also good looking and strong and loved each other very much. Many young women were attracted to them. They were quite popular.

Laizahreliana was comparatively quite well off though he had all his children, except the girl, work in the fields. They were hard workers too. One day while they worked in the field they felt that the sun was almost unbearable hot. Soon the water that they brought was all consumed and they wanted some more. Laicherhnawna being the eldest volunteered to go in search of water. It was not easy to get it because the hot season that year was exceptionally dry. As he went on and on in the forest, he did not find any lake or stream but at last he found water in a hollow between the two branches of a big tree. The water was not very fresh or clear. It looked rather pink. But he was not in a position to choose. He drank the water himself and filled the gourd water bottle with it. When he got back to the field, he found his brother almost on the point of collapse. They eagerly drank the water he brought to them.

Towards end of evening they noticed that their finger nails were becoming longer and longer and they were in the transformation stage from man to tiger. But when they became completely changed they forgot the fact that they were formerly

men. The three brothers played as quadrupeds played and when a passer by tried to tell them what happened they were so quick playing and chasing with each other that he did not have a chance. They heard a bark made by a barking deer and all three ran in the direction from where the bark was heard. Their parents did not know that they were tigers. They simply thought that they went away in search of fortune or adventure. Eventually the passer-by came to tell them the news of the three brothers being turned tigers and the parents were very sad to hear it, but they could do nothing. In fact, men being changed into tigers was something that was hard to believe and some suggested that the man who came to tell the news must have seen the tigers that killed the brothers. So they went in search of the remains of the brothers. They found nothing.

On the fourth day, to the surprise of every one, the three brothers came back home. Though they said nothing about what happened to them during those days. In few months that followed, some villagers complained that they had lost a pig or a cow and then though no one connected such things with the three brothers except their sister Ngunchiangi. She had two points of puzzle. Firstly no pig or cow of there was lost. Second, every time an animal was lost in their village, the three brother's were not at home. She told that to her father. The old man understood the situation well and he observed his sons without saying anything to them and he was convinced that his sons were Keimi man-tiger, who could change from man to tiger or from tiger to man at his will. Some of the villagers came to suspect them and at last they came to know that the three brothers were Keimi. The brothers also decided that they should no longer live in the village. They went away, but they remained in the vicinity of the village that even a Pasaltha would take extra care to go out into the forest to hunt. He observed his behaviour to help the poor, needy and maltreated people too.

Of the three brothers, the elder warned the younger two that their own villagers would now be turned into their enemies and therefore they must be careful of where they went and what

they ate. The two, however, remained as reckless as ever and soon they were killed by a Pasaltha. That made the big brother angry and he also became very ferocious.



One day a young woman of the village who was often ill treated by the stepmother had to come out of the village to collect fire wood. When she reached the village gate she saw a fine strong man sitting on a rock. He asked:

“I have been here for quite a long time and no villager except you come out of the village. Why?”

“Everybody was afraid of Hlawndawhthanga.”

“What about you? You too are afraid of him, aren’t you?”

“My knees shake with fear even at the mention of his name.”

“Then why do you come here?”

“Because the cruel stepmother forced me to go out and collect firewood.”

“Well, I can help in defending you from that dreaded enemy and in collecting firewood. Come along.”

When she got enough firewood, she bade good-bye to the young man who said:

“Don’t turn around to look at me until you reach that hill over there. At home leave the firewood outside and even when your stepmother force you to carry them in, disobey her.”

When she got to the village gate she looked back and saw only a big fine tiger. She went home leaving the fire wood outside. At night the stepmother told the young woman to take the wood in but she refused. The old woman was angry and cursing the young woman. She came out to carry the wood herself. A tiger killed her. Eventually the young woman accepted Hlawndawhthanga as her mate and they got one son.

Hlawndawnthanga was also in love with another woman called Tialtangi of a village at the foot of the Vuichhip range. Every time he wanted to visit that woman he took a pig from that village. The villagers told to the woman who advised them to set a trap called Falpui that would crush the animal caught in it to death. When she met him again she asked:

“Didn’t you find a Falpui at the village gate?”

“Yes, I did.”

“How did you escape that?”

“Easy, I jumped over it.”

“Really? I don’t believe you.”

“Come with me, you can watch as I jump.”

They went to the village gate and saw that he could jump much higher than the trap.

“Don’t you dare pass beneath the Falpui?”

“Why not? Since I know what it is, I could either destroy it or lift the weight with my hands and get through.”

“Don’t do either of these. Allow yourself to be pressed, with your strength. It would not do you any harm, would it?”

He would not like to be called a coward by the woman he loved. He went inside the Falpui and allowed the press to fall on him. He was crushed to death.

60. LIANDOVA

A widow remarried left two sons Liandova and Tuaisiala very much to their own fate. Tuaisiala was too small to be hired a labourer and therefore the elder Liandova alone worked to get food for both of them. Sometimes the man who hired Liandova to work told him to come alone and eat at his home. Then he would tell his younger brother to come underneath the floor of that house so that he could secretly pass food through a hole in the floor to him.

Liandova later thought of clearing a plot for two of them to cultivate their own. He collected good creepers from the forest to make a swing near the place where villagers, rested on their way to and from their cultivation plots. While they enjoy riding on the wing, he would borrow their cutlass called Dao to clear the forest for his own plot of land. At times he was hired to look after a granary, he would make clay pellets with a few seeds of grain in each of them to be taken away unnoticed and he planted these seeds in his field. In this way the poor brothers came to have a cultivation plot of their own with some crop growing in it. While they were weeding in that plot, they saw a crow carrying

away a snake. They shouted to frighten the crow and when the crow dropped the snake, they took it to cure its wounds that it received from the crow. It happened that the snake was the child of a witch. Who was very thankful to them for saving it. She often came to cook their food and promised to help them in time of need.

One day they joined a hunting party which killed a very big python. Their share was only the euthails. Fortunately they got precious ornaments together with gongs and bells inside the stomach. They did not tell other people about their luck. In the time of harvest, the whole village turned up to help reap a small plot. They intended to make fun of the poor boys who asked help to accomplished a work which was too small. When they reaped that seemingly small plot, they had to work one full day to finish it. The old witch came and entertained the villagers with her dance. She warned the boys not to join with others and laugh at her because if they laughed at her, the crop in the field would vanish and the reaping would be over. She was so funny and they controlled themselves not to laugh and finally at sunset the young brother laughed and the field became clear of crops and there was no more to reap. But the boys had ample store of paddy for one whole year.

One day chief Lersia came to visit the village where Liandova and Tuiasiala lived. He came with many followers and news of his visit had reached the village before he actually arrived. As nobody had seen him before, no one expected that a dirty man in rags was the chief himself. Each householder in the village invited a guest to stay at his house and they invited all the visitors except the miserable looking person. Liandova invited that person to his home. When he made himself comfortable in the house of Liandova, the visitor said that he was chief Lersia. He was quite pleased with the boys and invited them to his village in return. At chief Lersia's house, Liandova was told to choose one mithun from the herd of mithuns owned by the chief. Liandova went to seek the help

of an old woman who advised him to take a miserable looking one. He followed the advice and he found that the cow-mithun he took produced a calf every month. Quietly they saved quite a lot of property and they became rich.



The chief of their village had one pretty daughter called Tuaichawngi. One day her father summoned all bachelors in the village and permitted his daughter to choose one of them for her husband. She chose Liandova. The chief was angry because he

thought the young man was really poor and though he allowed them to marry. He had his daughter's pointing finger cut off to express his displeasure. Liandova gave many mithuns and valuable ornaments as the bride-price and only then the chief knew of his mistake. Liandova celebrated the Khuangchawi and their mother who had abandoned them before attended the festival. But she felt too ashamed of herself that she died after she returned from the festival.

Many years later Liandova alongwith wife and mistress had to cross the Run (Manipur River) and as the river was in spate at that time, the two woman were in danger of being drowned. While Liandova was trying to save his mistress, his wife Tuaichawngi got drowned.

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